ENCOUNTER

LITERATURE ARTS CURRENT AFFAIRS

An open letter to the
Hon^ble Mrs PETER RODD (NANCY MITFORD)
on A VERY SERIOUS SUBJECT
Evelyn Waugh

"ALGERIA DOES NOT EXIST . . ."
Herbert Luthy

USUALLY DESTROYED: *Aldous Huxley*

A MARVELLOUS DECADE (III)
Isaiah Berlin

SIDNEY NOLAN AND THE KELLY MYTH
Colin MacInnes

PORTRAIT OF A NEW YORK LADY: *Elizabeth Hardwick*

THE URANIUM FAIR: *Robert Jungk*

POEMS BY: Robert Horan, Robert Fitzgerald, Thom Gunn, Theodore Roethke, Vernon Watkins, W. S. Merwin, Edwin Muir, David Wright, Burns Singer

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ENCOUNTER

DECEMBER 1955 VOL. V, NO. 6

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This Month's *ENCOUNTER*:—

DR. ADENAUER was reported to have stated, shortly before his visit to Moscow, that although he noted an improvement in relations between East and West, we should not be too optimistic: Christian values still needed defending against Communist materialism, which had lost none of its militancy. Remarks of this kind are frequent. We shall doubtless hear more of them this Christmas season. Sometimes, though, it is worth enquiring closely into the commonplace.

"Materialism" is an ambiguous word and allows itself to be put to the most promiscuous uses. The Communists claim it as an exclusive philosophical title, and spend much polemical energy in proving that their enemies, or even those who seek to be their friends, are not Materialists but Idealists (the capital letters are important). This claim either amuses or perplexes Western philosophers, in whose eyes Communist Materialism is less a philosophy than a religion, with its dogmas, its orthodoxy, its crusading zeal. True, it is a religion that proclaims itself the opponent of all existing religions; but that total negation is itself a religious phenomenon—the "true faith" regards all other faiths as faithless.

In the West, materialism is a term that defines, not any single philosophy, but rather the quality of a whole range of philosophies. It is used loosely, as befits a loose word. Indeed, there are Christian theologians who would insist that Christianity is "materialistic" in a particular sense, since in contrast to certain other religions it calls upon man to redeem this material universe within the pattern of a metaphysical order, instead of escaping from this world to another.

What, then, remains of Dr. Adenauer's idea of a fundamental clash between Communist materialism and Christian values? Well, behind his formulation there can be perceived this truth: the conflict between the Communist and free worlds revolves about the kinds of ultimate answers to ultimate questions. Concerning the purpose of human life and human society certainly, the answers to these questions would in the East all be Marxistically "scientific"—that is to say, in theory they ought to be the same. But the very idea that they could be the same is a kind of Mystique of Materialism (with two big M's). In the West, the answers would be diverse—which does give us some claim to call ourselves democratic, though less claim to be upholders of "Christian values." Of course, the actual institutions of the two worlds do not precisely mirror the "values" they represent—that is in the nature of institutions. But the differences remain huge and perceptible enough. This war of the worlds is not exactly a war of matter against spirit, nor of spirit against spirit—but it is none the less a war for that.

IT IS, however, a war with some very curious aspects. For one thing, it appears to be carried on mainly by non-believers. The Christian world is largely populated by men for whom Christianity, whatever homage is paid to its historical contributions, is certainly not a matter of personal faith. Similarly, the Communist world is notably short of Marxists—in fact, this subject is one that Russians, when they turn up at international conferences, are evidently reluctant to discuss; and it is instructive to note that not a single biography of Karl Marx has been written in Russia since the Revolution. (A fictionalised biography of the young Marx did appear in 1934, for which the author, Galina Serebryakova, was rewarded by fifteen years of hard labour.)

Perhaps an even odder aspect of the situation is that between the two worlds, the Materialist and the Christian, there is in common a commitment to something that neither will explicitly avow—to materialism indeed, meaning by that vulgar, uncapitalised term an obsessive preoccupation with the tangible, the useful, the pleasurable, and the profitable things of this world. It matters not that, according to Marxism, the true aim of Communism is to end man's subservience to things, to eliminate the self-seeking of personal advantage, and to replace it with a new sense of fellowship and community. It equally matters not that, if there is one truth attested

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to not only by Christianity but by Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Hinduism, and Judaism as well, it is that there is no correlation between the genuinely happy life and the materially abundant one. No one disputes this truth, everyone blandly disregards it, in Dr. Adenauer's Germany as in Mr. Khrushchev's Russia. All the world wants, not salvation (however defined) but a television set. And if by some miracle, which may yet come to pass, everyone were granted this desire, tomorrow all the world would want another television set, for the children.

One can understand the insistence on material improvement in places where there are people who are on—or over—the brink of starvation; but there is no less demand for "economic progress" in America than in India. Our posterity may find it as difficult to comprehend our passion for "the economics of growth" and an ever higher standard of living as we find it hard to understand the medieval attitude that gluttony and avarice—even among poor people—were sinful. To us, it seems the most natural thing in the world that every desire should be transformed into a need. As an American philosopher (he was born in Europe) once wryly observed: "Suppose that someone were to offer our country a wonderfully convenient mechanism, but demand in return the privilege of killing thousands of our people every year. How many of those who would indignantly refuse such a request will condemn the use of the automobile now that it is already with us?"

We are all materialists now. What is more, we cannot be otherwise. The whole of modern life is so harnessed to the machinery of producing and distributing and consuming that, if we started to tinker radically with it, we would bring down unemployment, social unrest, and even war upon our heads. That is what makes the ordinary Christian sermon ring so hollow—renunciation we need not bother to deny in principle, since we cannot possibly affirm it in practice.

It is true, as Samuel Johnson remarked, that people are least engaged in mischief when they are busy making money. There is some consolation in this, and it may even be hoped that, in the Communist world, the fanaticism of Materialism will be softened and pacified by the balm of materialism. There remains, however, the problem of how to assert the life of the spirit in such a materialist world, of how to avoid lethargy, selfishness, and boredom from permeating and corrupting, not only the souls of men, but the whole social order. *That*, some future historian may easily say, was the basic problem of our time.

Notes on Our Contributors:—

Herbert Luthy's book, *The State of France*, was published in August by Secker and Warburg. . . . Isaiah Berlin's article is the second of the series of Northcliffe Lectures which he gave in University College, London, last year and later on the Third Programme of the BBC. . . . Elizabeth Hardwick's novel, *The Simple Truth*, was published this year by Weidenfeld and Nicolson. . . . Robert Jungk's latest book, *Tomorrow is Already Here*, was published by Hart-Davis. . . . Colin MacInnes is author of *To the Victors the Spoils* and *June in her Spring*. . . . Marcus Cunliffe is a lecturer in the Department of American studies at the University of Manchester.

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Sir David Kelly

MY ENEMY'S ENEMY (story)
Kingsley Amis

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Laurens van der Post

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A. J. Ayer

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Geoffrey Gorer

★

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U AND NON-U
A. S. C. Ross

THE FUTURE OF PROSPERITY
Hugh Gaitskell

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Aldous Huxley

Usually Destroyed

OUR guide through the labyrinthine streets of Jerusalem was a young Christian refugee from the other side of the wall which now divides the ancient city from the new, the non-viable state of Jordan from the non-viable state of Israel. He was a sad, embittered young man —and well he might be. His prospects had been blighted, his family reduced from comparative wealth to the most abject penury, their house and land taken away from them, their bank account frozen and devaluated. In the circumstances, the surprising thing was not his bitterness, but the melancholy resignation with which it was tempered.

He was a good guide—almost too good, indeed; for he was quite remorseless in his determination to make us visit all those deplorable churches which were built, during the nineteenth century, on the ruins of earlier places of pilgrimage. There are tourists whose greatest pleasure is a trip through historical associations and their own fancy. I am not one of them. When I travel, I like to move among intrinsically significant objects, not through an absence peopled only by literary references, Victorian monuments, and the surmises of archæologists. Jerusalem, of course, contains much more than ghosts and architectural monstrosities. Besides being one of the most profoundly depressing of the earth's cities, it is one of the strangest and, in its way, one of the most beautiful. Unfortunately our guide was far too conscientious to spare us the horrors and the unembodied, or ill-embodied, historical associations. We had to see everything—not merely St. Anne's and St. James's and the Dome of the Rock, but the hypothetical site of Caiaphas' house and what the Anglicans had built in the seventies, what the Tsar and the German Emperor had countered with in the eighties, what had been considered beautiful in the early nineties by the Copts or the French Franciscans. But, luckily, even at the dreariest moments of our pilgrimage there were compensations. Our sad young man spoke English well and fluently, but spoke it as 18th century virtuosos played music—with the addition of *fioriture* and even whole cadenzas of their own invention. His most significant contribution to colloquial English (and, at the same time, to the science and art of history) was the insertion into almost every sentence of the word "usually." What he actually meant by it, I cannot imagine. It may be, of course, that he didn't mean anything at all, and that what sounded like an adverb was in fact no more than one of those vocalised tics to which nervous persons are sometimes subject. I used to know a professor whose lectures and conversation were punctuated, every few seconds, by the phrase, "With a thing with a thing." "With a thing with a thing" is manifestly gibberish. But our young friend's no-less-compulsive "usually" had a fascinating way of making a kind of sense—much more sense, very often, than the speaker had intended. "This area," he would say as he showed us one of the Victorian monstrosities, "this

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area" (it was one of his favourite words) "is very rich in antiquity. St. Helena built here a very vast church, but the area was usually destroyed by the Samaritans in the year 529 after Our Lord Jesus Christ. Then the Crusaders came to the area, and built a new church still more vast. Here were mosaics the most beautiful in the world. In the 17th century after Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Turks usually removed the lead from the roof to make ammunition; consequently rain entered the area and the church was thrown down. The present area was erected by the Prussian government in the year 1879 after Our Lord Jesus Christ and all these broken-down houses you see over there were usually destroyed during the war with the Jews in 1948."

USUALLY destroyed and then usually rebuilt, in order, of course, to be destroyed again and then rebuilt, *da capo ad infinitum*. That vocalised tic had compressed all history into a four-syllabled word. Listening to our young friend, as we wandered through the brown, dry squalor of the Holy City, I felt myself overwhelmed, not by the mere thought of man's enduring misery, but by an obscure, immediate sense of it, an organic realisation. These pullulations among ruins and in the dark of what once were sepulchres; these hordes of sickly children; these galled asses and the human beasts of burden bent under enormous loads; these mortal enemies beyond the dividing wall; these priest-conducted groups of pilgrims befuddling themselves with the vain repetitions, against which the founder of their religion had gone out of his way to warn them—they were dateless, without an epoch. In this costume or that, under one master or another, praying to whichever God was temporarily in charge, they had been here from the beginning. Had been here with the Egyptians, been here with Joshua, been here when Solomon in all his glory ordered his slaves in all their misery to build the temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had usually demolished and the Jews, just as usually, had put together again. Had been here during the long pointless wars between the two kingdoms, and at the next destruction under Ptolemy, the next but one under Antiochus and the next rebuilding under Herod, and the biggest, best destruction of all by Titus. Had been here when Hadrian abolished Jerusalem and built a brand-new Roman city, complete with baths and a theatre, with a temple of Jupiter and a temple of Venus, to take its place. Had been here when the insurrection of Bar-Kochba was drowned in blood. Had been here while the Roman Empire declined and turned Christian, when Chosroes the Second destroyed the churches and when the Caliph Omar brought Islam and, most unusually, destroyed nothing. Had been here to meet the Crusaders and then to wave them goodbye, to welcome the Turks and then to watch them retreat before Allenby. Had been here under the Mandate and through the troubles of forty-eight, and were here now and would be here, no doubt, in the same brown squalor, alternately building and destroying, killing and being killed, indefinitely.

"I do not think," Lord Russell has recently written, "that the sum of human misery has ever in the past been so great as it has been in the last twenty-five years." One is inclined to agree. Or are we, on second thoughts, merely flattering ourselves? At most periods of history moralists have liked to boast that theirs was the most iniquitous generation since the time of Cain—the most iniquitous and therefore, since God is just, the most grievously afflicted. Today, for example, we think of the 13th century as one of the supremely creative periods of human history. But the men who were actually contemporary with the cathedrals and Scholastic Philosophy regarded their age as hopelessly degenerate, uniquely bad, and condignly punished. Were they right, or are we? The answer, I suspect, is: both. Too much evil and too much suffering can make it impossible for men to be creative; but within very wide limits greatness is perfectly compatible with organised insanity, sanctioned crime, and intense, chronic unhappiness for the majority. Every one of the great religions preaches a mixture of profound pessimism and the most extrava-

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gant optimism. "I show you sorrow," says the Buddha, pointing to man in his ordinary unregenerate condition. And in the same context Christian theologians speak of the Fall, of Original Sin, of the Vale of Tears, while Hindus refer to the working of man's home-made destiny, his evil karma. But over against the sorrow, the tears, the self-generated, self-inflicted disasters, what super-human prospects! If he so wishes, the Hindu affirms, a man can realise his identity with Brahman, the Ground of all being; if he so wishes, says the Christian, he can be filled with God; if he so wishes, says the Buddhist, he can live in a transfigured world where Nirvana and Samsara, the eternal and the temporal, are one. But, alas—and from optimism based on the experience of the few, the saints and sages return to the pessimism forced upon them by their observation of the many—the gate is narrow, the threshold high, few are chosen because few choose to be chosen. In practice man usually destroys himself—but has done so up till now a little less thoroughly than he has built himself up. In spite of everything, we are still here. The spirit of destruction has been willing enough, but for most of historical time its technological flesh has been weak. The Mongols had only horses as transport, only bows and spears and butchers' knives for weapons; if they had possessed our machinery, they could have depopulated the planet. As it was, they had to be content with small triumphs —the slaughter of only a few millions, the stamping out of civilisation only in Western Asia.

In this universe of ours nobody has ever succeeded in getting anything for nothing. In certain fields, progress in the applied sciences and the arts of organisation has certainly lessened human misery; but it has done so at the cost of increasing it in others. The worst enemy of life, freedom and the common decencies is total anarchy; their second-worst enemy is total efficiency. Human interests are best served when society is tolerably well-organised and industry moderately advanced. Chaos and ineptitude are antihuman; but so too is a superlatively efficient government, equipped with all the products of a highly developed technology. When such a government goes in for usually destroying, the whole race is in danger.

THE Mongols were the æsthetes of militarism; they believed in gratuitous massacre, in destruction for destruction's sake. Our malice is less pure and spontaneous; but, to make up for this deficiency, we have ideals. The end proposed, on either side of the Iron Curtain, is nothing less than the Good of Humanity and its conversion to the Truth. Crusades can go on for centuries, and wars in the name of God or Humanity are generally diabolic in their ferocity. The unprecedented depth of human misery in our time is proportionate to the unprecedented height of the social ideals entertained by the totalitarians on the one side, the Christians and the secularist democrats on the other.

And then there is the question of simple arithmetic. There are far more people on the earth today than there were in any earlier century. The miseries, which have been the usual consequence of the usual course of nature and the usual behaviour of human beings, are the lot today, not of the three hundred millions of men, women, and children who were contemporary with Christ, but of almost two and a half billions. Obviously, then, the sum of our present misery cannot fail to be greater than the sum of misery in the past. Every individual is the centre of a world, which it takes very little to transform into a world of unadulterated suffering. The catastrophes and crimes of the 20th century can transform almost ten times as many human universes into private hells as did the catastrophes and crimes of two thousand years ago. Moreover, thanks to improvements in technology, it is possible for fewer people to do more harm to greater numbers than ever before.

After the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, how many Jews were carried off to Babylon? Jeremiah puts the figure at four thousand six hundred, the compiler of the Second Book of Kings at ten thousand. Compared with the forced migrations of our time,

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the Exile was the most trivial affair. How many millions were uprooted by Hitler and the Communists? How many more millions were driven out of Pakistan into India, out of India into Pakistan? How many hundreds of thousands had to flee, with our young guide, from their homes in Israel? By the waters of Babylon ten thousand at the most sat down and wept. In the single refugee camp at Bethlehem there are more exiles than that. And Bethlehem's is only one of dozens of such camps scattered far and wide over the Near East.

So it looks, all things considered, as though Lord Russell were right—that the sum of misery is indeed greater today than at any time in the past. And what of the future? Germ warfare and the H-bomb get all the headlines and, for that very reason, may never be resorted to. Those who talk a great deal about suicide rarely commit it. The greatest threat to happiness is biological. There were about twelve hundred million people on the planet when I was born, six years before the turn of the century. Today there are two thousand four hundred and sixty-nine millions; thirty years from now there will probably be four thousand millions. At present about sixteen hundred million people are underfed. In the nineteen-eighties the total may well have risen to twenty-five hundred millions, of whom a considerable number may actually be starving. In many parts of the world famine may come even sooner. In his Report on the Census of 1951, the Registrar General of India has summed up the biological problem as it confronts the second most populous country of the world. There are now three hundred and seventy-five million people living within the borders of India, and their numbers increase by five millions annually. The current production of basic foods is seventy million tons a year, and the highest production that can be achieved in the foreseeable future is ninety-four million tons. Ninety-four million tons will support four hundred and fifty million people at the present sub-standard level, and the population of India will pass the four hundred and fifty million mark in 1969. After that, there will be a condition of what the Registrar General calls "catastrophe."

In the index for the sixth volume of Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History*, Popillius Laenas gets five mentions and Porphyry of Batamaea two: but the word you would expect to find between these names, *Population*, is conspicuous by its absence. In his second volume, Mr. Toynbee has written at length on "the stimulus of pressures"—but without ever mentioning the most important pressure of them all, the pressure of population on available resources. And here is a note in which the author describes his impressions of the Roman Campagna after twenty years of absence. "In 1911 the student who made the pilgrimage of the Via Appia Antica found himself walking through a wilderness almost from the moment when he passed beyond the City Walls. . . . When he repeated the pilgrimage in 1931, he found that, in the interval, Man had been busily reasserting his mastery over the whole stretch of country that lies between Rome and the Castelli Romani . . . . The tension of human energy on the Roman Campagna is now beginning to rise again for the first time since the end of the 3rd century B.C." And there the matter is left, without any reference to the compelling reason for this "rise of tension." Between 1911 and 1931 the population of Italy had increased by the best part of eight millions. Some of these eight millions went to live in the Roman Campagna. And they did so, not because Man with a large M had in some mystical way increased the tension of human energy, but for the sufficiently obvious reason that there was nowhere else for them to go. In terms of a history that takes no cognisance of demographical facts, the past can never be fully understood, the present is quite incomprehensible and the future entirely beyond prediction.

THINKING, for a change, in demographic as well as in merely cultural, political and religious terms, what kind of reasonable guesses can we make about the sum of human misery in the years to come? First, it seems pretty certain that more people

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will be hungrier and that, in many parts of the world, malnutrition will modulate into periodical or chronic famine. (One would like to know something about the Famines of earlier ages, but the nearest one gets to them in Mr. Toynbee's index is a blank space between Falak-ad-Din Muhammad and Gaius Fannius.) Second, it seems pretty certain that, though they may help in the long run, remedial measures, aimed at reducing the birth-rate, will be powerless to avert the miseries lying in wait for the next generation. Third, it seems pretty certain that improvements in Agriculture (not referred to in Mr. Toynbee's sixth-volume index, though Agrigentum gets two mentions and Agis IV, King of Sparta, no less than forty-seven) will be unable to catch up with current and foreseeable increases in population. If the standard of living in industrially backward countries is to be improved, agricultural production will have to go up every single year by at least two and a half per cent, and preferably by three and a half per cent. Instead of which, according to the FAO, Far Eastern food production per head of population will be ten per cent less in 1956 (and this assumes that the current Five Year Plans will be fully realised) than it was in 1938.

Fourth, it seems pretty certain that, as a larger and hungrier population "mines the soil" in a desperate search for food, the destructive processes of erosion and deforestation will be speeded up. Fertility will therefore tend to go down as human numbers go up. (One looks up *Erosion* in Mr. Toynbee's index, but finds only Esarhaddon, Esotericism, and Esperanto; one hunts for *Forests*, but has to be content, alas, with Formosus of Porto.)

Fifth, it seems pretty certain that the increasing pressure of population upon resources will result in increasing political and social unrest, and that this unrest will culminate in wars, revolutions, and counter-revolutions.

Sixth, it seems pretty certain that, whatever the avowed political principles and whatever the professed religion of the societies concerned, increasing pressure of population upon resources will tend to increase the power of the central government and to diminish the liberties of individual citizens. For, obviously, where more people are competing for less food, each individual will have to work harder and longer for his ration, and the central government will find it necessary to intervene more and more frequently in order to save the rickety economic machine from total breakdown, and at the same time to repress the popular discontent begotten by deepening poverty.

If Lord Russell lives to a hundred and twenty (and, for all our sakes, I hope most fervently that he will), he may find himself remembering these middle decades of the 20th century as an almost Golden Age. In 1954, it is true, he decided that the sum of human misery had never been so great as it had been in the preceding quarter century. On the other hand, "you ain't seen nuthin' yet." Compared with the sum of four billion people's misery in the eighties, the sum of two billion miseries just before, during and after the Second World War may look like the Earthly Paradise.

But meanwhile here we were in Jerusalem, looking at the usually destroyed antiquities and rubbing shoulders with the usually poverty-stricken inhabitants, the usually superstitious pilgrims. Here was the Wailing Wall, with nobody to wail at it; for Israel is on the other side of a barrier, across which there is no communication except by occasional bursts of rifle fire, occasional exchanges of hand grenades. Here, propped up with steel scaffolding, was the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—that empty tomb to which, for three centuries, the early Christians paid no attention whatsoever, but which came, after the time of Constantine, to be regarded, throughout Europe, as the most important thing in the entire universe. And here was Siloam, here St. Anne's, here the Dome of the Rock and the site of the Temple, here, more ominous than Pompeii, the Jewish quarter, levelled, usually, in 1948 and not yet usually reconstructed. Here, finally, was St. James's, of the Armenians, gay with innumerable rather bad but charming paintings,

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and a wealth of gaudily coloured tiles. The great church glowed like a dim, religious merry-go-round. In all Jerusalem it was the only oasis of cheerfulness. And not alone of cheerfulness. As we came out into the courtyard, through which the visitor must approach the church's main entrance, we heard a strange and wonderful sound. High up, in one of the houses surrounding the court, somebody was playing the opening Fantasia of Bach's *Partita in A minor*—playing it, what was more, remarkably well. From out of the open window, up there on the third floor, the ordered torrent of bright pure notes went streaming out over the city's immemorial squalor. Art and religion, philosophy and science, morals and politics—these are the instruments by means of which men have tried to discover a coherence in the flux of events, to impose an order on the chaos of experience. The most intractable of our experiences is the experience of Time—the intuition of duration, combined with the thought of perpetual perishing. Music is a device for working directly upon this experience of Time. The composer takes a piece of raw undifferentiated duration and extracts from it, as the sculptor extracts the statue from his marble, a complex pattern of tones and silences, of harmonic sequences and contrapuntal interweavings. For the number of minutes it takes to play or listen to his composition, duration is transformed into something intrinsically significant, something held together by the internal logics of style and temperament, of personal feelings interacting with an artistic tradition, of creative insights expressing themselves within and beyond some given technical convention. This Fantasia, for example—with what a tireless persistence it drills its way through time! How effectively—and yet with no fuss, no self-conscious heroics—it transfigures the mortal lapse through time into the symbol, into the very fact, of a more than human life! A tunnel of joy and understanding had been driven through chaos and was demonstrating, for all to hear, that perpetual perishing is also perpetual creation. Which was precisely what our young friend had been telling us, in his own inimitable way, all the time. Usually destroyed—but also, and just as often, usually rebuilt. Like the rain, like sunshine, like the grace of God and the devastations of Nature, his verbalised tic was perfectly impartial. We walked out of the courtyard and down the narrow street. Bach faded, a donkey brayed, there was a smell of undisposed sewage. "In the year of Our Lord 1916," our guide informed us, "the Turkish government usually massacred approximately seven hundred and fifty thousand Armenians."

Epitaph for Everyman

My heart was more disgraceful, more alone,
And more courageous than the world has known.

O passer-by, my heart was like your own.

Frances Cornford

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An open letter to the Hon^ble Mrs PETER RODD (NANCY MITFORD) on A VERY SERIOUS SUBJECT *from EVELYN WAUGH*

DEAREST NANCY,

Were you surprised that your article on the English aristocracy caused such a to-do? I was not. I have long revered you as an agitator—agitatrix, *agitateuse*?—of genius. You have only to publish a few cool reflections on 18th century furniture to set gangs on the prowl through the Faubourg St. Germain splashing the walls with "Nancy, go home." Class distinctions in England have always been the matter for higher feeling than national honour, the matter of feverish but very private debate. So, when you brought them into the open, of course everyone talked, of course the columnists quoted you and corrected you. Letters poured in to the various editors, many of them, I am told, unprintably violent. You were the subject of a literary competition (which produced very sad entries) and now here am I, late but implacable, chipping in too.

Should delicacy have restrained you? your friends anxiously ask. There are subjects too intimate for print. Surely class is one? The vast and elaborate structure grew up almost in secret. Now it shows alarming signs of dilapidation. Is this the moment to throw it open to the heavy-footed public? Yes, I think it is, and particularly, as you have done, to the literary public. My reproach is that, in doing so, you have in your skittish way bamboozled a great number of needy young persons. Have you ever heard of the "Butler Education Act"? I suppose not, although it happened in the days when you still lived among us. It was one of the things that politicians did when no one was looking, towards the end of the war. It has nothing at all to do with training male indoor-servants nor with instructing the designer of the "Unknown Political Prisoner" in the intricacies of his craft. The name derives from the Mr. Butler who at the time of writing has just knocked something off the price of my clothes. Clearly he is a generous fellow. In his Education Act he provided for the free distribution of university degrees to the deserving poor. Very handy for splitting atoms and that kind of thing, you will say. But quite a lot of Mr. Butler's protégés choose, or are directed into, "Literature." I could make your flesh creep by telling you about the new wave of philistinism with which we are threatened by these grim young people who are coming off the assembly lines in their hundreds every year and finding employment as critics, even as poets and novelists. L'École de Butler are the primal man and woman of the classless society. Their novelists seem to be aware of the existence of a rather more expensive world than their own—bars in which spirits are regularly drunk in preference to beer, loose women who take taxis, crooks in silk shirts—but of the ramifications of the social order which have

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obsessed some of the acutest minds of the last 150 years, they know less than of the castes of India. What can their critics hope to make of the undertones and innuendoes, the evocative, reminiscent epithets of, say, Tony Powell or Leslie Hartley?

It was a worthy project to take them through a rudimentary course of social map-reading and no one should have been better qualified for the task than you with your host of friends in every class.

Nor was L'École de Butler your only source of pupils. Consider the cinema trade, the immigrant producers from God knows where who perhaps have never set foot in a private house in the kingdom. Their solecisms glare at us in blazing colour and shriek at us from amplifiers. And the BBC and, for all we know, the Television. A huge mission field was white for your sickle. Eager, appealing eyes were turned to you through the cigarette smoke. Was it kind, dear Nancy, to pull their legs?

II

You very properly steer clear of the royal family and start your exposition with the peerage. You remark, correctly, that a title in England has a precise legal significance as it has scarcely anywhere else, and that, partly from our system of primogeniture, titled people do not constitute a separate caste. But you go on to say that a man "becomes an aristocrat as soon as he receives a title"; ". . . his outlook from now on will be the outlook of an aristocrat." You know jolly well that that isn't true.

The relationship between aristocracy and nobility in England is certainly baffling. I do not suppose you could find any two people in complete agreement about it. My own estimate would be that about half the nobility are aristocrats and about two-thirds of the aristocracy are noble (in which catalogue I loosely include baronets and people descended in the male line from peers, whether or no they are themselves titled). The official order of precedence is, of course, quite irrelevant in determining true social position. By no means all earls are the superiors of all barons or of baronets or even of plain gentlemen. Nor is there any greater degree of equality in the Upper House of Parliament than in the Commons. Ancestry, possessions, even intelligence and good looks, have their part in deciding real precedence. You say: "Ancestry has never counted much in England." As a guide to human character, pedigrees are, I suppose, about as valuable as horoscopes. Well, some of the world's greatest men have resorted to astrologers and millions of subtle Asiatics direct their lives by them today. Learned opinion may change. It may be decided that there was something in the stars after all. My own scepticism is based on the impossibility of identifying the real fathers in the ages when adultery was very common and divorce very rare. Whenever there is a scandal elderly persons will remark, "Ah, that is the Fortinbras blood coming out," and explain that all their mother's generation were irregularly conceived. But undoubtedly most of our fellow-countrymen attach great importance to ancestry. Take a look at the shelves marked "Genealogy" in any large secondhand bookshop. You will find displayed at modest prices hundreds of volumes expensively produced, mostly during the last hundred years, for the sole purpose of exalting their authors' families. Genealogy is still as thriving a trade as it was in the days of Elizabeth I, when the Officers of Arms began fabricating the great pedigrees that link the despoilers of the Church with the age of chivalry. People in the last century have been caught filling their parish churches with bogus tombs. Scholars such as Round and Baron spent their lives in exposing fraudulent pedigrees and many who are not scholars, but who, like myself, cherish the delusion that we possess a "historical sense," have felt the fascination of this sonorous and decorative pursuit.

However, you give us some genealogical figures. Are you sure you have got them right? I know you went to high authority for them, but I can't help wondering how much the present Officers of Arms regard themselves as bound in honour to support the decisions of their less scrupulous predecessors.

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You say that 382 peers have arms granted before 1485 *and have inherited them in the male line*. My italics, as they say; for the statement staggers me. Neither of us is an expert. We can only look about us and go by rough personal impressions. It seems to me that a large number of our ancient families have the entry "assumed by royal licence the name and arms" somewhere in their pedigrees. Look at the Fortinbrases. Sly Ned Fartingbrass who got the estate at the Dissolution was known to all. It was for his grandson that the Heralds invented a link with the extinct crusaders, Fortinbras. The peerage was granted by Charles I and failed in the male line in 1722 when Mr. Binks married the heiress and sat in the Commons as Mr. Fortinbras-Binks, exercising the full political influence of his wife's family. His son, who called himself Mr. Binks-Fortinbras, married well, could return two members; he was rewarded by a peerage, Fortinbras, in the second creation. From that time Binks was dropped and the stolen coat of Fortinbras moved across, with the connivance of the College of Heralds, to the first quarter.

You say that 65 existing baronies were created before 1711. Do you include the quaint house of Strabolgi?

Noble families die out almost as fast as new ones are created. I have just taken a sample from Burke's *Peerage and Baronetage 1949* and compared it with the issue for 1885. The volumes fall open, need I say it? at Redesdale. Of the succeeding dozen names only one (and that, incidentally, a family of foreign origin) is to be found in the earlier edition; and of the twelve families who followed Redesdale in 1885, six are already extinct. That is a big turnover in two generations. Perhaps you will argue that it is the new families who die out, since only direct heirs of the original grantee can succeed, and that the older the family the further you can cast back for an heir. Well, looking round, the feudal overlords in the district I inhabit were the Berkeleys. That earldom has just become extinct. And their next-door neighbours, who bear a medieval name and arms, have borne and changed no less than five surnames in the last eight generations as the property devolved on female heirs. I think you should have questioned your pursuivant more closely before accepting his figures.

III

THE Fortinbrases are a delicious vignette, typical of your fictions. I find one fault only. Surely they should have more children? Impotence and sodomy are socially O.K. but birth control is flagrantly middle-class. But you invented them, I know, to illustrate your theme that aristocrats can't or won't make money. I could remind you of half a dozen prosperous and industrious City men of impeccable origins but I should have to admit that they have not worn well. The acceptance of high living and leisure as part of the natural order is a prerequisite of the aristocratic qualities and achievements. The debonair duke living by his wits, so popular on the stage, soon grows to resemble the plebeian crook. His brother who goes into business and sticks to it and makes good, is soon indistinguishable from his neighbours in Sunningdale. You should have said, not that aristocrats can't make money in commerce, but that when they do, they become middle-class.

It is here that we reach the topic that has caused the pother—the supposed gulf between what you inelegantly describe as "U and non-U." This gulf exists in every English mind. What has shocked your critics is that you fix it where you do, definitely, arbitrarily, and, some would say, capriciously. There is an unwholesome contemporary appetite—the product, perhaps, of psychiatry and the civil service—for categories of all kinds. People seem to be comforted instead of outraged when they are told that their eccentricities entitle them to membership in a class of "psychological types." They are inured to filling in forms which require a "description" of themselves and their houses. So they have fastened with avidity on the section of your comprehensive essay which pretends to provide the mechanism for grading themselves and their friends.

Everything turns on "the grand old name

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of gentleman." We have no equivalent phrase in English to "*noblesse oblige*." All precepts of manners and morals define the proper conduct of "gentlemen." Lord Curzon, a paragon of aristocratic usage, when, as Chancellor of Oxford University, he was shown the menu of a proposed entertainment of the King at Balliol, remarked succinctly: "No gentleman has soup at luncheon"; he did not say: "No monarch . . ." or "No marquis. . . ." He appealed above the standards of court or castle to the most elusive standard in the world.

When I was last in Palestine I asked a Zionist how he defined a Jew. Immigrants from every climate from China to Peru were jostling round us. There were atheist Slavs and negroes from the Upper Nile who are reputed to eat snakes. It seemed a pertinent question. He answered: "Everyone who thinks he is a Jew, is one."

In the same way, the basic principle of English social life is that *everyone* (everyone, that is to say, who comes to the front door) *thinks he is a gentleman*. There is a second principle of almost equal importance: *everyone draws the line of demarcation immediately below his own heels*. The professions rule out the trades; dentists, vets; doctors, dentists; the Services, the professions; the Household Brigade, the line regiments; squires, squireens; landed families who had London houses ruled out those who spent all the year at home; and so on, in an infinite number of degrees and in secret, the line is, or was, drawn. It is essentially a process of ruling *out*. If you examine the accumulated code of precepts which define "the gentleman" you will find that almost all are negative.

Few people are aware, still less observant, of more than a small fraction of this code. Most people have a handful of taboos, acquired quite at random. Usually at an impressionable age someone has delivered a judgment which has lodged in the memory. The lack of reason in these dooms makes them the more memorable, and no subsequent experience mitigates their authority.

For example, there is a cousin of yours, a jolly baron, who affects a nautical nonchalance in dress. He and I were talking one day when there passed an acquaintance, a grandee, a member of the Jockey Club, your cousin's superior and *a fortiori* mine. Your cousin, not a very serious man normally, regarded this sleek, russet figure with aversion and said, with deep seriousness: "My father told me that no gentleman ever wore a brown suit."

Another cousin of yours, of ducal family, is a man notorious for the grossness of his vocabulary. He has only to hear a piece of *argot* from the Bowery to adopt it as his own. But once, in early youth, he was sharply corrected for calling a kinsman his "relative" or "relation." He cannot remember which, but both words have become anathema. Of all the sage advice poured out on him by schoolmasters and clergymen and dons and commanding officers, that alone remains, and if either word is used in his hearing, he starts as though stung and, being what he is, he rounds on the speaker with abuse.

All nannies and many governesses, when pouring out tea, put the milk in first. (It is said by tea fanciers to produce a richer mixture.) Sharp children notice that this is not normally done in the drawing-room. To some this revelation becomes symbolic. We know a woman, far from conventional in other ways, who makes it her touchstone. "Rather m.i.f., darling," she says to convey inferior social station.

I could multiply examples almost without end. There is practically no human activity or form of expression which at one time or another, in one place or another, I have not heard confidently condemned as plebeian, for generations of English have used the epithets "common" and "middle-class" as general pejoratives to describe anything which gets on their nerves.

It is natural to the literary mind to be unduly observant of the choice of words. Logan Pearsall Smith was the classical case. I met him once only. He did not speak to me until we stood on the doorstep leaving. He then said: "Tell me, how would you describe the garment you are wearing? A greatcoat? An overcoat? A top-coat?" I replied: "Over-

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coat." "Ah, would you? Yes. Most interesting. And, tell me, would that also be the usage of an armigerous admiral?"

That way lay madness and I fear that if you are taken too seriously you and Professor Ross may well drive your readers into the bin. When in your novel you made "Uncle Matthew" utter his catalogue of irrational prohibitions, you were accurately recording a typical conversational extravagance. When you emerge *in propria persona* as the guide to Doric youth, you are more mischievous. Of course, it is broadly true that the phrases you dub "U" come more naturally to most ladies and gentlemen, but every family and set develops its private vocabulary and syntax and everyone regards every usage but his own as either pedantically affected or as barbarous. I know of a family whose epithet of condemnation is quite simply "N L U" (not like us). Phrases that were originally adopted facetiously, in inverted commas as it were, pass into habitual use; the chic jargon of one decade—Philip Sassoon's "I couldn't like it more," for instance—becomes the vulgarism of the next; words once abhorred, like "week-end," become polite. If Professor Ross's Finns or your literary critics wander out into the English world armed with your lexicon, seeking to identify the classes they encounter, they will drop many bricks.

For there are no classes in England; there is only precedence. A professor likes to mark anything α β γ. The socialist likes to speak of "capitalists, bourgeois, intellectuals, and workers." In England these easy categories do not apply. There is a single line extending from Windsor to Wormwood Scrubs, of individuals all justly and precisely graded (no one knows this order of precedence: it is a Platonic idea), and the organisation of English society has never been, as I understand it is in many other countries, a system of horizontal strata. You do not find a dozen viscountesses sitting together in a drawing-room while twenty-two baronets play cricket in the park. The grandees met occasionally on state occasions or on the racecourse, but they kept away from one another's houses. English society was a complex of tribes, each with its chiefs, witch-doctors, elders, and braves, each with its own dialect and deity, each strongly xenophobic.

IV

IT IS when we come to the last part of your article, much the most important part, which has nevertheless attracted least notice, that my amusement at your prank becomes a little strained.

"The English lord is a wily old bird" you take as your text, and your theme is that he is enormously rich. He pays neither taxes nor death duties. He "glories" in turning his house into a public museum. He has given up London simply because he is not witty enough to keep a salon. He sells his pictures because he does not appreciate them. He prefers herbaceous borders and flowering shrubs to formal parterres, which require two dozen gardeners. His reduced circumstances are all a hoax. He is biding his time until the present craze for equality has passed, when he will re-emerge in all his finery to claim all his privileges, to ravish peasant brides and transport poachers to Botany Bay.

Can you really believe any of this, even living, as you do, so remote from the scene you describe? Not long ago an American cutie, married to a Labour politician, published a book propounding the same argument. Everyone tolerantly asked: "What can an American cutie married to a Labour politician hope to know of such things? Ask her to dinner and let her see for herself." But what are we to say now when Nancy, Queen of the Hons, comes out with the same malicious errors? The English, you should remember, have a way of making jokes about their disasters, but you would find, if you lived here, that the loudest jokes about opening Stately Homes are made by the wives who have recent and perhaps direful associations with them, rather than by the husbands. The state-rooms of Bowood, you should know, are being demolished because their owner prefers privacy. I am not familiar with the household accounts of the few magnates who still preserve a recognisable ghost of their former establishments, but I am pretty

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sure something has to be sold every year to keep going. But instead of expostulating with you, let me turn to your dupes and tell them two facts, which you have never attempted to hide, bless you, but which are not well known.

The first is rather endearing. You were at the vital age of twelve when your father succeeded to his peerage, and until less than a year before there was little likelihood of his ever succeeding. It was a great day for "Hons" when you and your merry sisters acquired that prefix of nobility. Hitherto it had been the most shadowy of titles, never spoken, and rarely written. You brought it to light, emphasised and aspirated, and made a glory of it. And with that magic vocable came (very briefly it is true) a sensational change of fortune. If your uncle had not been killed in action, if your posthumous cousin had been a boy, all you enchanting children would have been whisked away to a ranch in Canada or a sheep-run in New Zealand. It is fascinating to speculate what your careers would then have been. Anyway, at that impressionable age an indelible impression was made; Hons were unique and lords are rich.

The other fact is not nice. You are a socialist every bit as staunch as the American cutie. What is more, as you mention in your article, you regard Lloyd George as a great man (and, we must suppose, as a great aristocrat, too, in his last days). Did you, perhaps, once, to tease your father, learn the Limehouse speech by heart? Your incitement to class-war reads like it.

"You think the upper-classes are down and out, do you? Don't you believe it, comrades. They despise you. They spend their time sneering at the way you talk. They are a fascist underground. Smash 'em, comrades, *now*."

Is that what you are really saying, Nancy? I hope you are just teasing, as I am. I hope. I wonder.

Fondest love,

EVELYN

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Herbert Luthy

"Algeria Does Not Exist . . ."

ALL of North Africa may be in a state of turmoil at the present moment, but instances of bloodshed occurring on the same day at points some hundreds of miles apart can hardly be accounted for on a single scale of reckoning. In Morocco, the drama is an open one, presented in terms sufficiently clear to render a solution at least possible—as indeed was the case with the Tunisian drama, which went through the same alternating phases of goodwill and violent upheaval, of false starts and setbacks, of brutal repression and an inertia so exasperating as to make all hope seem futile, only to be brought to an end in 1955 by the grant of an autonomy that had already been officially proclaimed as the ripe and proper solution as far back as 1950. Could all that loss of time and of human life, the cleaning-up operations, the terrorism and counter-terrorism, have been avoided? Certainly—*if* history enacted itself in the form of an intelligent debate between equally enlightened minds that were concerned solely with the future, that operated without regard for contingencies, and were thus remote from passions that are always blind and sometimes sanguinary, from interests that are always imperious and as often respectable as sordid, and from the defence of those acquired positions which, criticise them as harshly as we will, are none the less essential to those who possess them—*if*, in short, each fresh decision could be inscribed on a *tabula rasa*, was guided solely by "objective considerations," and (one must add) executed in an authoritarian way. We know that this is far from being the case: and the tortuous and contradictory path by which grave political decisions are reached exacts a heavy price, amounting at times to catastrophe. In Morocco, everything is on a larger scale than in Tunisia: the nationalist and colonialist traditions, the passions and interests engaged, go far deeper. Nevertheless, Morocco, like Tunisia, does have one virtue: it exists; and since this aspect of the problem is clear and generally accepted, there is at least a basis for discussion.

In Algeria, on the other hand, a much more secret and painful drama is in progress, and one to which, theoretically, there is no solution at all; for it may be summed up in a single sentence: *Algeria does not exist.*

ALGERIA does not exist, either in law, in official terminology, or even in the history textbooks. For that matter, neither do the Algerians. Now part of France, this country, we are told, was nothing, a no-man's-land, before becoming something other than itself. Can anyone imagine the sum of human tragedies that such non-existence entails? And if Algeria does not exist, how can one even begin to solve a problem that is denied in advance? Of course, everyone admits that there are *problems*—social, economic, cultural, electoral—all of which are

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widely discussed: but not *the* problem of Algeria, for to admit such a problem would be to deny the unity of the French Republic.

On the Moroccan question, there are clear and well-defined opinions—opinions which clash and come into violent conflict, but which also evolve and ripen. Can the same be said of Algeria? It all looks so simple: here are three French departments (henceforward there will be four), their towns just as French as, say, Marseilles or Belfort, their deputies sitting among the others in parliament, their red wine liberally blended with the red wine of France. Who (apart from the inhabitants and a few students of local history) would feel it necessary to hold any particular opinion about the Vaucluse or the Seine-Maritime or Finistère, or for that matter, about Guadeloupe or Martinique?

But if there is no Algerian political problem, there still remains the human (and police) problem created by the presence of Algerians, in metropolitan France as well as in North Africa. Where they are concerned, everyday experience overrides what legal terminology has decreed: for Algerians clearly do exist, even in large numbers—one rubs shoulders with them as freely in the streets of Paris as in Algiers—and as a result, everyone has some opinion or other about them, an opinion that the least enquiry shows to be most vehemently held. If one sets aside their emotional content and the not always very polite terms in which they are expressed, these attitudes fall into two main categories. One attitude, orthodox and juridical, asserts: Algerians are Frenchmen. The other, heterodox and humanitarian, asserts: Algerians are men like ourselves.

At first sight, these appear to be no more than two very slightly different ways of saying the same thing. And, indeed, both attitudes, which are rather assumed as articles of faith than asserted as facts, derive from the same great postulate of equality, whose two versions were formely one: "all men are equal" and "all citizens are equal." The conclusions which follow from each of these two versions, however, are contradictory in the extreme, and the day may not be far distant when we shall see them pitted against each other with drawn daggers.

Algerians are Frenchmen: it is not necessary to dwell at length on the consequences of this juridical postulate, for in all their official declarations on Algerian policy, successive French Governments have made its meaning perfectly plain. What it amounts to is this: unlike a Tunisian or a Moroccan, an Algerian cannot be a nationalist, or even an autonomist, any more than can a Breton or a Burgundian, a Provençal or a Basque—none of them, in short, has any legal existence, the administrative divisions being Finistère, Côte d'Or, Var, Basses-Pyrenées, and the department of Oran. Unable to be a nationalist or an autonomist, he may, nevertheless, in certain deplorable cases, become a separatist, a rebel and traitor to his country, as has happened in the past in other parts of France; but then it is no longer a question of political opinion, but of the crime of high treason. It follows, since no possible ground for discussion is left, that all such attempts must be ruthlessly repressed. One does not truckle to treason. Schemes to assist the unemployed, to provide new schools, or to promote the use of modern agricultural methods, all these are conceivable: but to meet and discuss matters with Algerians *as* Algerians —never! One recalls the treatment meted out to the Algerian members of the "Algerian Manifesto" party at the Constituent Assembly: "I am here to defend the interests of my country"—"Your country is France! Shut up!"

The legal fiction is one of the great traditions of that attitude of mind which claims to derive from Descartes, but which, in its severity, is legalistic rather than Cartesian. When Louis XIV decided in 1685, not, as has been said, to suppress or exterminate the Protestants, but merely to proclaim that with the help of God and the dragoons he had succeeded in converting every one of them, and that France having become entirely Catholic there was no further need for the Edict of Nantes, the French Protestants did in fact legally cease to exist for a whole cen-

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tury; no marriages or baptisms were celebrated, and there was neither civil status nor right of inheritance, outside the One and Indivisible Church. Yet since, by numerous subterfuges and the open or covert connivance of their compatriots, an actual minority continued to exist beyond the legal pale "in the errors of the so-called reformed religion," and since, for practical and above all police reasons, some term had to be found to designate those who existed in fact if not in law, for a hundred years the distinction was made in official and even in popular usage between "old" and "new Catholics" (it being tacitly understood that the latter were not Catholics at all). Such distortions of language arise from that legalistic spirit which is able to ignore all manner of disorders so long as the sublime appearances of order and unity are maintained, but which is capable of the most savage severity once the legal fiction is in danger of being denied by the facts. In the same way, Algeria is purely French, but for practical and police reasons a distinction must be made between "citizens of the first" and "citizens of the second electral college" (with a difference in voting power of 8 : 1), or between Frenchmen of "European" or "Koranic status."

The distinction is a subtle one, yet it takes on a bitter savour when introduced into accounts of insurrection and massacre. For the legal fiction must be upheld, even in the midst of horror: one cannot, for example, say that so many Algerians and so many Frenchmen have been killed, for there are only French Algerians; hence, on the one hand, one speaks of "rioters," "rebels," "outlaws"; and on the other, of "Europeans" (one cannot talk of "whites," since France knows no distinctions of race, colour, or religion). Having said that, the balance is clearly far from being even: one always knows the exact number of European victims, but one never knows whether a nought or two ought not to be added to the number of victims on the other side, the side of the "new Frenchmen." There is no more lofty and sublime doctrine than that which asserts all citizens are equal; yet ever since it was first proclaimed in the shadow of the guillotine, none has more frequently proved terrifying when actually applied.

THE second attitude—*Algerians are men like ourselves*—is at once less legalistic and more ambiguous; but at least it leaves one with the possibility of admitting that, not only do Algerians exist in their own right as individuals, but that they are a people like any other, capable of having those same national aspirations which, whether one welcomes or opposes them, are regarded in any other people as natural, legitimate, and even noble. Furthermore, being "men like ourselves," they also have the supreme right to be *other* than ourselves, and even to be nationalists in a manner so different from our own that the same term barely suffices, since the "nationalism" in question is not that of a national but of a religious community. One is not necessarily obliged to come to such a conclusion, but at least it remains feasible, once the concept of equality is applied not to the "citizen," who has no choice in the matter, but to the "man."

It will be said that the first attitude is that of the "colonialist" Right, while the second belongs to the "egalitarian" Left. In that case, all French traditions are overthrown: the Left is revealed as pluralist and the Right as Jacobin. In this respect, a survey of public opinion might produce some rather surprising results. "Truth is one, error is multiple," wrote Mme de Beauvoir, in her recent analysis of "the mental outlook of the Right," "so that one sees why the bourgeoisie is pluralist." If only that were true! For if it were, the bourgeoisie would have a splendid chance to refashion a reputation of genuine liberalism for itself. For humanity is as many-sided as error (and the truth of a Moslem is not necessarily the one of *Les Temps Modernes*).

Yet both versions of the egalitarian principle seem equally powerless before the Algerian drama. It will be said that the first formula, officially enthroned and placed beyond dispute, is already in retreat from the lesson of the facts. But where it really seems

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to be in retreat is in its noblest and most human aspect—in that great vision of a single yet multiple French community—in other words, precisely where it shared the same essence as the second attitude, that of "men like ourselves." This second attitude, alas, is in even more precipitate flight: for the "lesson of the facts" that we are now witnessing is scarcely a lesson in human brotherhood. By reaction, a third attitude then emerges in stark outline, an attitude which does not contradict the legal fiction but indeed even flows from it, an attitude which asserts: "These are bad Frenchmen, ungrateful sons who bite the hand that fed them, unworthy of the honour bestowed upon them, a criminal element in the nation. . . ."

This attitude has always lurked just beneath the surface, even in the great assimilationist dream, and it is not limited merely to the settlers and "colonialists." Equality, either civic or human, is not a given fact, but is rather a philosophical or religious postulate, which must be heroically defended against all appearances to the contrary the moment one emerges from the ivory tower of eternal principles. One need not go far in order to meet Algerians in the flesh. In Paris, or in almost any other big French town, one encounters them every day: carpet-vendors, sellers of peanuts or cheap oddments or smuggled cigarettes. . . . "Men like ourselves"? The notion is a noble and generous one, and it is uplifting to reflect that these poor wretches have all been made citizens. When one penetrates into the less elegant areas, the working-class districts, they become less picturesque and more numerous: unskilled labourers, keepers of dilapidated cafés and shops, men without fixed occupation, without family (their families are all too far away!), always sticking together, living in overcrowded tenements, alien and slightly sinister. "Men like ourselves"? In the great French city of Algiers, one meets them in hordes from the moment one sets foot in the place, outcasts from society, luggage porters, shoe-blacks, and still the same carpet-vendors and sellers of peanuts and cheap oddments. To venture into the Casbah or Maison Carrée is merely to encounter a larger and more macabre version of the Paris quarters of Goutte d'Or or Saint-Denis. "Men like ourselves"? Perhaps, so long as one can ignore them, or find some use for the small services they offer; but the moment they develop into a noisy, insistent, perhaps even hostile crowd, trouble begins. The tourist, arriving without prejudice and armed with the best of intentions, very soon begins to adopt the "colonialist" mentality; he has only to find himself surrounded by ragged and half-starved swarms of men or children, all babbling incomprehensible demands or offering ridiculous services and refusing to be shaken off, to fall in spite of himself into the same instinctive reactions as the settler in the remote interior: there are too many of them, too many useless lives, and there is something excessive about their hunger, their raggedness, their eagerness to oblige, which becomes merely a calculating servility the moment one no longer takes it for granted. "Men like ourselves"? Pity easily turns to fear before this swarming human multitude: certainly one is prepared to accept their existence, but let them be content with that, or else. . . .

THERE are certain unprintable expressions which one nevertheless hears over and again in conversation, even loudly proclaimed. Such expressions are not restricted to Algeria and the settlers, or to reactionary colonialist circles, but are common currency in France, in Paris, in Barbès-Rochechouart or the Place Maubert. And what has happened and is happening in the Goutte d'Or and all the other Arab-settled districts of France is just as grave as what is happening in the Aurès Mountains or in Kabylia. The Franco-Algerian melting-pot has always been located in France rather than in Algeria: it has always been easier and more straightforward for Frenchmen and Algerians to make contact in Paris than in Algiers. It is, of course, doubtful whether Algerian immigration into France, the sprawl of North African shanty towns about the fringes of French cities, and the intermarriage between

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the two peoples which has occurred as often as not in all too squalid circumstances, has proved a wholely successful experiment; but at least the experiment was tried. These "new Frenchmen" on French soil may have undergone many hardships, but they also struck up new friendships; they grew more radical in outlook but they also became Europeanised; they returned home very different from what they were when they arrived, to become rebels and agitators perhaps, but more in smouldering rebellion against the ancestral immobility of Islamic society than against the French colonial community.

Besides all the hardships and miseries, there was a ferment of growth that opened up incalculable vistas. All that has come to an end, and in so short a space of time that people are only just beginning to realise it. Confronted by events in North Africa, by hostility and fear, the Islamic community in the slums of France, at once threatened and threatening, has closed its ranks and made itself impenetrable. Frenchmen from France and Moslems from Algeria no longer speak to each other, or only with mutual mistrust. French citizens arriving in France as tolerated immigrants, the latter now feel that a strange fate has laid upon them the double burden of being nowhere at home, neither in the French territory of Algeria, nor in France itself, the country of their exile, being everywhere equal in law and everywhere without a country of their own. There is no dialogue possible with disloyal citizens? By dint of thrusting everyone aside, it is true that there will shortly be no one left to speak to, and those thrust aside have already been superseded by others who, in all honesty, can scarcely be regarded as proper spokesmen: the supporters of the Manifesto, even Messali and the dissident groups of his followers, have already been left far behind, in the holy war of race and religion; and now even the tried and trusted Moslem elected are beginning to drift into the separatist camp. . . .

"ALGERIANS are French citizens, *therefore* no discussion is possible. . . ." That is the aberration of the Cartesian spirit, the cruel trap of the legal fiction, from which sooner or later some way of escape will have to be found. For there are certainly Algerians, and Algeria does exist—and together they will raise the most difficult of all North African problems. For while, in the course of intensive colonisation extending over a century and a quarter (how discreetly that particular anniversary was celebrated!), the whole country has been juridically, administratively, and economically integrated with France, the mass of the population has remained outside this process. The real tragedy is that, while Algeria is no longer Algerian, the Algerians themselves have not, for all that, become French. The situation is too complex to be avoided by the assertion that, in principle, it does not exist, that the legal fiction rules it out of court. For the Algerians do indeed exist, and are not merely "men like us": they are men like themselves; and of all the rights bestowed upon them, this alone has been withheld, the most important, whatever the protagonists of equality may say, of all the rights of man.

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Isaiah Berlin

A Marvellous Decade (III)

Belinsky: Moralist and Prophet

IN 1856 Ivan Aksakov, one of two famous Slavophil brothers, who had no sympathy for political radicalism, wrote an account of one of his tours of the provincial centres of European Russia. The tour was conceived by him as a kind of nationalist pilgrimage, intended at once to draw comfort and inspiration from direct contact with the untouched mass of the Russian people, and to warn those who needed warning against the horrors of the West and the snares of Western liberalism. Aksakov was bitterly disappointed. "The name of Belinsky is known to every thinking young man," he wrote, "to everyone who is hungry for a breath of fresh air in the reeking bog of provincial life. There is not a county schoolmaster who does not know—and know by heart—Belinsky's letter to Gogol. If you want to find honest people, people who care about the poor and the oppressed, an honest doctor, an honest lawyer not afraid of a fight, you will find them among Belinsky's followers. . . . Slavophil influence is negligible. . . . Belinsky's proselytes increase." Plainly we are dealing with a major phenomenon of some kind—someone to whom, eight years after his death, idealistic young men, during one of the worst moments of repression in the nineteenth century, looked as their leader. The literary reminiscences of the young radicals of the thirties and forties—Panayev and his wife, Turgenev, Herzen, Annenkov, Ogaryova, Kavelin, Dostoevsky—agree in stressing this aspect of Belinsky as the "conscience" of the Russian intelligentsia, the inspired and fearless publicist, the ideal of the young *révoltés*, the writer who almost alone in Russia had the character and the eloquence to proclaim clearly and harshly what many felt, but either could not or would not openly declare.

We can easily imagine the kind of young man Aksakov was speaking of. In Turgenev's novel *Rudin* there is a mildly ironical, but sympathetic and touching portrait of a typical radical of that time, employed as tutor in a country house. He is a plain-looking, awkward, clumsy university student, neither intelligent nor interesting; indeed he is dim, provincial, rather a fool, but pure-hearted, embarrassingly sincere and self-revealing, and comically naïve. The student is a radical not in the sense that he holds clear intellectual or moral political views, but because he is filled with a vague but bitter hostility towards the government of his country, the grey, brutish soldiers, the dull, dishonest, and frightened officials, the illiterate, superstitious, and sycophantic priests; for the peculiar mixture compounded of fear, greed, and a dislike of everything new or connected with the forces of life, which formed the prevailing Russian atmosphere. He is in full reaction against the queer variety of cynical resignation which accepted the starved and semi-barbarous condition of the serfs and the deathly stagnation of provincial Russian

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society as something not merely natural, but as possessing a deep, traditional value, almost a kind of spiritual beauty, the object of a peculiar, nationalist, quasi-religious mystique of its own. Rudin is the life and soul of the house party, and the young tutor is completely taken in by his specious liberal rhetoric, worships the ground Rudin treads on, and fills his easy generalisations with all his own moral enthusiasm and faith in truth and material progress. When Rudin, still gay and charming and irresistible, still overflowing with empty liberal platitudes, refuses to face a moral crisis, makes feeble excuses, behaves like a craven and a fool, and gets himself out of an awkward predicament by a squalid piece of minor treachery, his follower, the simple seeker after truth, is left dazed, helpless, and outraged, not knowing what to believe or which way to turn, in a typical Turgenev situation in which everyone ends by behaving with weakness and irresponsibility that is human, disarming, and disastrous. The tutor Bassistov is a very minor figure, but he is a direct if humble descendant of the foil—and sometimes the dupe—of the original "superfluous man" of Russian society, of Pushkin's Lensky (as opposed to Onegin); he is of the same stock as Pierre Bezuhoff (as against Prince Andrey) in *War and Peace*, as Levin in *Anna Karenina* and all the Karamazovs, as Krutsifersky in Herzen's novel *Who is to Blame?*, as the student in *The Cherry Orchard*, as Colonel Vershinin and the Baron in *The Three Sisters*. He is, in the context of the 1840's, the figure that came to be thought of as one of the characteristic figures in the Russian social novel, the perplexed idealist, the touchingly naïve, over-enthusiastic, pure-hearted man, the victim of misfortunes which could be averted but in fact never are. Sometimes comical, sometimes tragical, often confused, blundering, and inefficient, he is incapable of any falseness, or, at least, of irremediable falseness, of anything in any degree sordid or treacherous; sometimes weak and self-pitying, like Chekhov's heroes—sometimes strong and furious like Bazarov in *Fathers and Children*, he never loses an inner dignity and an indestructible moral personality in contrast with which the ordinary philistines who form the vast majority of normal society appear at once pathetic and repulsive.

THE original prototype of these sincere, sometimes childish, at other times angry, champions of persecuted humanity, the saints and martyrs in the cause of the humiliated and the defeated—the actual, historical embodiment of this most Russian type of moral and intellectual heroism, is Vissarion Grigorievich Belinsky. His name became the greatest Russian myth in the nineteenth century, detestable to the supporters of autocracy, the Orthodox Church, and fervid nationalism, disturbing to elegant and fastidious lovers of Western classicism, and for the same reasons the idealised ancestor of both the reformers and the revolutionaries of the second half of the century. In a very real sense he was one of the founders of the movement which culminated in 1917 in the overthrow of the social order which towards the end of his life he increasingly denounced. There is scarcely a radical Russian writer—and few liberals—who did not at some stage claim to be descended from him. Even such timid and half-hearted members of the opposition as Annenkov and Turgenev worshipped his memory, even the conservative government censor, Goncharov, spoke of him as the best man he had ever known. As for the true left-wing authors of the sixties—the revolutionary propagandists Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky, Nekrasov, Lavrov and Mikhailovsky, and the Socialists who followed them, Plekhanov, Martov, Lenin and his followers—they formally recognised him as one of the earliest, and, with Herzen, the greatest of the heroes of the heroic forties, when the organised struggle for full social as well as political freedom, economic as well as civil equality, was held to have begun in the Russian Empire. Clearly, then, he was, to say the least, an arresting figure in the history of Russian social thought. Those who have read the memoirs of his friends, Herzen, Turgenev, and, of course, Annenkov, will discover for themselves the reason for this. But

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in the West Belinsky is even now relatively unknown. Yet, as anyone knows who has read at all widely in his works, he is the father of the social criticism of literature, not only in Russia but perhaps even in Europe, the most gifted and formidable enemy of the æsthetic and religious and mystical attitudes to life. Throughout the nineteenth century his views were the great battlefield between Russian critics, that is, between two incompatible views of art and indeed of life. He was always very poor, and he wrote to keep alive, and, therefore, too much. Much of his writing was composed in fearful haste, and a great deal is uninspired hackwork. But in spite of all the hostile criticism to which he has been exposed from his earliest beginnings as a critic (and let me add that Belinsky is to this day the subject of heated controversy—no other figure dead for over a century has excited so much devotion and so much odium among Russians), his best work is in Russia regarded as classical and immortal. In the Soviet Union his place is all too secure, for (despite his lifelong war against dogma and conformism) he has there long been canonised as a founding father of the new form of life. But the moral and political issue with which he was concerned is, in the West, open still. This alone makes him a figure of interest at the present time.

His life was outwardly uneventful. He was born in poverty in 1810 or 1811, at Sveaborg in Finland, and brought up in the remote city of Chembar in the government of Penza. His father was a retired naval doctor who settled down to a small practice and to drink. He grew up a thin, consumptive, over-serious, pinched little boy, prematurely old, unsmiling and always in deadly earnest, who soon attracted the attention of his schoolmasters by his single-hearted devotion to literature, and his grim, unseasonable, and apparently devouring passion for the truth. He went to Moscow as a poor scholar with a government stipend, and after the normal troubles and misfortunes of impoverished students of humble birth in what was still the home of the gentry and nobility—the University of Moscow—was expelled for reasons which are still obscure, but probably connected with lack of solid knowledge, and the writing of a play denouncing serfdom. The play, which survives, is very badly written, rhetorical, mildly subversive, and worthless as a work of literature, but the moral was plain enough for the intimidated university censors, and the author was poor and lacked protectors. Nadezhdin, then a liberal young professor of European Literature at the university, who edited an *avant-garde* periodical, was impressed by Belinsky's obvious seriousness and passion for literature, thought that he detected a spark of inspiration, and engaged him to write reviews. From 1835 until his death thirteen years later, Belinsky poured out a steady stream of articles, critical notices, and reviews in various journals. They split educated Russian opinion into rival camps, and became the gospel of the progressive young men in every corner of the Empire, particularly of the university students who became his most devoted and fanatical followers.

IN APPEARANCE Belinsky was of middle height, thin, bony, and slightly stooped; his face was pale, slightly mottled, and flushed easily when he was excited. He was asthmatic, tired easily, and usually looked worn out, haggard, and rather grim. His movements were awkward, like a peasant's, nervous and abrupt, and before strangers he tended to be shy, brusque, and sullen. With his intimates, the young radicals, Turgenev, Botkin, Bakunin, Granovsky, he was full of life and irrepressible gusto. In the heat of a literary or philosophical discussion his eyes would shine, his pupils dilate, he would walk from corner to corner talking loudly, rapidly, and with violent intensity, coughing and waving his arms. In society he was clumsy and uncomfortable and tended to be silent, but if he heard what he regarded as wicked or unctuous sentiments he intervened on principle, and Herzen testifies that on such occasions no opponent could stand before the force of his terrible moral fury. He was at his best when excited by argument. Let me quote Herzen's words: "Without con-

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troversy, unless he was irritated, he did not talk well; but if he felt wounded, when his dearest convictions were touched, and the muscles of his cheeks began to quiver and his voice broke—one should have seen him then: he would fling himself at his victim like a panther, he would tear him to pieces, make him ridiculous, grotesque, pitiful, and in the course of it would develop his own thought with astonishing power and poetry. The argument would often end in blood which poured from the sick man's throat. Pale, choking, with eyes fixed on whoever he was addressing, he would, with a trembling hand, lift the handkerchief to his mouth, and stop—terribly upset, undone by his lack of physical strength. How I loved and how I pitied him at those moments."

At dinner with some decayed and respectable official who had survived from the reign of the Empress Catharine, Belinsky went out of his way to praise the execution of Louis XVI. Someone ventured to say in front of him that Chaadaev (a Russian sympathiser with Roman Catholicism, who had denounced the barbarism of his country) had, in a civilised country, been very properly declared insane by the Czar for insulting the dearest conviction of his people. Belinsky, after vainly tugging at Herzen's sleeve and whispering to him to intervene, finally broke in himself, and said in a dead, dull voice that in still more civilised countries the guillotine was invented for people who advanced that kind of opinion. The victim was crushed, the host was alarmed, and the party quickly broke up. Turgenev, who disliked extremes, and detested scenes, loved and respected Belinsky for precisely this social fearlessness that he himself conspicuously lacked.

With his friends Belinsky played cards, cracked commonplace jokes, talked through the night, and charmed and exhausted them all. He could not bear solitude. He was married unsuitably, from sheer misery and loneliness. He died of consumption in the early summer of 1848 on the eve, it seems, of being arrested by the political police. In fact, the head of the gendarmerie remarked to a friend of his: "It is a great pity that Belinsky is dead; otherwise we should have had the pleasure of rotting him in one of our fortresses." He was thirty-seven or thirty-eight at the time of his death, and at the height of his powers.

FOR all the external monotony of his days, Belinsky lived a life of abnormal intensity, punctuated by acute crises, intellectual and moral, which helped to destroy him physically. The subject which he had chosen, the subject from which he cannot be separated even in thought, was literature, and although he was, despite his detractors' charges of lack of authentic capacity, acutely sensitive to pure literary quality, to the sounds and rhythms and nuances of words, to images and poetical symbolism and the purely sensuous emotions directed towards them, yet that was not the central factor of his life. This centre was the influence of ideas; not merely in the intellectual or rational sense in which ideas are judgments or theories, but in that sense which is perhaps even more familiar, but more difficult to express, in which ideas embody emotions as well as thoughts, inarticulate as well as explicit attitudes to the inner and to the outer worlds. This is the sense in which ideas are something wider and more intrinsic to the human beings who hold them than opinions or even principles, the sense in which ideas constitute, and indeed are, the central complex of relations of a man towards himself and to the external world, and may be shallow or deep, false or true, closed or open, blind or endowed with the power of insight. This is something which is discovered in behaviour, conscious and unconscious, in style, in gestures and actions and minute mannerisms at least as much as in any explicit doctrine or professions of faith. It is ideas and beliefs in this sense, as they are manifested in the lives and works of human beings—what is sometimes vaguely called ideology — that perpetually excited Belinsky to enthusiasm or anxiety or loathing, and kept him in a state sometimes amounting to a kind of moral frenzy. He believed what he believed very passionately, and sacrificed his entire nature to it. When

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he doubted he doubted no less passionately, and was prepared to pay any price for the answers to the questions which tormented him. These questions were, as might be supposed, about the proper relation of the individual to himself and to other individuals, to society, about the springs of human action and feeling, about the ends of life, but in particular about the imaginative work of the artist, and his moral purpose.

All serious questions to Belinsky were always, in the end, moral questions: about what it is that is wholly valuable and worth pursuing for its own sake. To him this meant the question of what is alone worth knowing, saying, doing, and, of course, fighting for—if need be, dying for. The ideas which he found in books or in conversation were not for him, in the first place, intrinsically interesting or delightful or even intellectually important, to be examined, analysed, reflected about in some detached and impartial fashion. Ideas were, above all, true or false. If false, then like evil spirits to be exorcised. All books embody ideas, even when least appearing to do so; and it is for these that, before anything else, the critic must probe. To illustrate this I shall give you a curious, indeed a grotesque, but nevertheless, it seems to me, illuminating example of his method. His critics and biographers do not mention it, since it is a trivial piece of writing. In the course of his day-to-day journalism Belinsky published a short review of a Russian version of some nineteenth century French translation of the *Vicar of Wakefield*. The review starts conventionally enough, but gradually assumes an irritated and hostile tone: Belinsky does not like Goldsmith's masterpiece because he thinks it falsifies the moral facts. He complains that in the character of the Vicar, Goldsmith represents apathy, placid stupidity, and incompetence as being ultimately superior to the qualities of the fighter, the reformer, the aggressive champion of ideas. The Vicar is represented as a simple soul, full of Christian resignation, unpractical, and constantly deceived; and this natural goodness and innocence, it is implied, is somehow both incompatible with, and superior to, cleverness, intellect, action. This to Belinsky is a deep and damnable heresy. All books embody points of view, rest on underlying assumptions, social, psychological, and æsthetic and the basis on which the Vicar rests is, according to Belinsky, philistine and false. It is a glorification of persons who are not engaged in the struggle of life, who stand on the edge uncommitted, *dégagés*, and enter only to be bamboozled and compromised by the active and the crooked; which leads them to material defeat but moral victory. But this, he exclaims, is to pander to irrationalism—to the faith in "muddling through" clung to by the average bourgeois everywhere, and to that extent it is a dishonest representation of cowardice as a deeper wisdom, of failure, temporising, appeasement, as a profound understanding of life. One may reply that this is an absurd exaggeration; and places a ludicrously heavy burden on the shoulders of the poor Vicar. But it illustrates the beginning of a new kind of social criticism, which searches in literature neither for ideal "types" of men or situations (as the earlier German romantics had taught), nor for an ethical instrument for the direct improvement of life; but for the attitude to life of an individual author, of his *milieu*, or age or class. This attitude then requires to be judged as it would be in life; in the first place for its degree of genuineness, its adequacy to its subject matter, its depth, its truthfulness, its ultimate motives.

"I am a *littérateur*," he wrote. "I say this with a painful and yet proud and happy feeling. Russian literature is my life and my blood." And this is intended as a declaration of moral status. When the radical writer, Vladimir Korolenko, at the beginning of this century said, "My country is not Russia, my country is Russian literature," it is this position that was being so demonstratively defended. Korolenko was speaking in the name of a movement which, quite correctly, claimed Belinsky as its founder, of a creed for which literature alone was free from the betrayals of everyday Russian life, and alone offered a hope of justime, freedom, truth.

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Books and ideas to Belinsky were crucial events, matters of life and death, salvation and damnation, and he therefore reacted to them with the most devastating violence. He was by temperament not religious, nor a naturalist, nor an æsthete, nor a scholar. He was a moralist, secular and anti-clerical through and through. Religion was to him a detestable insult to reason, theologians were charlatans, the church a conspiracy. He believed that objective truth was discoverable in nature, in society, and in the hearts of men. He was not an impressionist, he was not prepared to confine himself to ethically neutral analysis or meticulous description without bias or comment, of the texture of life or of art. This he would have thought, like Tolstoy, or Herzen, shallow, self-indulgent or frivolous, or else (if you knew the moral truth but preferred the outer texture) as deliberate and odious cynicism. The texture was an outer integument, and if you wanted to understand what life was really like (and therefore what it could become), you must distinguish what is eternal and desperately important, from the ephemeral, however attractive. It is not enough to look at or even re-create what Mrs. Woolf called the "semi-transparent envelope" which encloses our existence from life to death; you must sink beneath the mere flow of life, and examine the structure of the ocean bed, and how the winds blow and how the tides flow, not as an end in itself (for no man may be indifferent to his own fate), but in order to master the elements and to steer your craft, it may be with unending suffering and heroism, it may be against infinitely great odds, towards the goal of truth and social justice which you in fact know to be (because this cannot be doubted) the only goal worth seeking for its own sake. To linger on the surface, to spend yourself in increasingly elaborate descriptions of its properties and of your own sensations, was either moral idiocy or calculated immoralism, either blindness or a craven lie which would in the end destroy the man who holds it. The truth alone was beautiful and it was always beautiful, it could never be hideous or destructive or bleak or trivial, and it did not live in the outer appearance. It lay "beneath" (as Schelling, Plato, Hegel taught) and was revealed only to those who cared for the truth alone, and was therefore not for the neutral, the detached, the cautious, but for the morally committed, for those who were prepared to sacrifice all they had in order to discover and vindicate the truth, and liberate themselves and others from the illusions, conventions, and self-deceptions which blinded men about the world and their duty in it. This creed was the creed, then enunciated for the first time, of the Russian intelligentsia, of the moral and political opposition to autocracy, to the Orthodox church, and to nationalism, the triple slogan of the supporters of the régime.

Naturally with a temperament of a Lucretius or a Beethoven, Belinsky as a critic was, unlike his Western contemporaries, neither a classically pure connoisseur of platonic forms like Landor, nor a sharp, pessimistic, disillusioned observer of genius like Sainte-Beuve; he was a moralist, painfully and hopefully sifting the chaff from the grain. If anything seemed to him new or valuable or important or even true, he would fly into ecstasies of enthusiasm and proclaim his discovery to the world in hurrying, ill-written impassioned sentences, as if to wait might be fatal because the attention of the vacillating public might be distracted. Moreover one must herald the truth tumultuously, for to speak in an even voice would perhaps not indicate its crucial importance. And in this way Belinsky, in his exuberance, did discover and over-praise a handful of comparatively unknown and worthless writers and critics whose names are today justly forgotten. But he also revealed, and for the first time, the full glory of the great sun of Russian literature, Alexander Pushkin, and he discovered and assessed at their true worth Lermontov, Gogol, Turgenev, and Dostoevsky, not to mention such writers of the second rank as Goncharov, or Grigorovich, or Koltzov. Of course Pushkin had been recognised as a writer of genius before Belinsky had begun writing, but it was Belinsky's eleven famous essays that established his importance, not

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merely as a poet of magnificent genius, but as being, in the literal sense, the creator of Russian literature, of its language, its direction, and its place in the national life. Belinsky created the image of Pushkin, which henceforth dominated Russian writing, as a man who stood to literature as Peter the Great to the Russian State, the radical reformer, the breaker of the old, the creator of the new; the implacable enemy and the faithful child of the national tradition, as at once the invader of hitherto remote foreign territory, and the integrator of the deepest and most national elements of the Russian past. With consistency and passionate conviction, Belinsky paints the portrait of a poet who justly saw himself as a herald and a prophet, because by his art he had made Russian society aware of itself as a spiritual and political entity, with its appalling inner conflicts, its anachronisms, its anomalous position among other nations, its huge untried strength and dark and tantalising future. With a multitude of examples he demonstrates that this was Pushkin's achievement, and not that of his predecessors—the official trumpeters of Russia's spirit and Russia's might, even of the most civilised and talented, such as the epic poet Derzhavin, the admired historian Karamzin, or his own mentor, the generous, romantic, mellifluous, always delightful Zhukovsky.

This unique domination of literature over life, and of one man over the entire consciousness and imagination of a vast nation, is a fact to which there is no precise parallel, not even in the place occupied in the consciousness of their nations by Dante or Shakespeare, Homer or Vergil or Goethe. And this extraordinary phenomenon, whatever may be thought of it, is, to a degree still unrecognised, the work of Belinsky and his disciples, who first saw in Pushkin the central planet, the source of light in whose radiance Russian thought and feeling grew so wonderfully. Pushkin himself, who was a gay, elegant, and, in his social life, an arrogant, disdainful, and whimsical man, thought this embarrassing and spoke of the angular and unfashionable Belinsky as "A queer character who for some extraordinary reason seems to adore me." He was a little frightened of him, half suspected that he had something to say, thought of asking him to contribute to the journal which he edited, recollected that his friends thought him unpresentable, and successfully avoided a personal meeting.

Pushkin's snobbery, his intermittent attempts to pretend that he was an aristocratic dilettante and not a professional man of letters at all, touched the socially sensitive Belinsky on the raw, just as the mask of worldly cynicism which Lermontov adopted had offended him at their first meeting. Nevertheless, in the presence of genius Belinsky forgot everything. He forgot Pushkin's coldness, he realised that behind Lermontov's Byronic mask, his insulting cynicism and desire to wound and be wounded, there was a great lyrical poet, a serious and penetrating critic, and a tormented human being of great tenderness and depth. The genius of these men had bound its spell upon him, and it is really in terms of their, and in particular Pushkin's, art and personality that Belinsky, whether he was aware of it or not, tried to define his own ideas of what a creative artist is and should be.

As a critic he remained, all his life, a disciple of the great German romantics. He sharply rejected the didactic and utilitarian doctrines of the function of art, then enjoying a vogue among the French socialists:

> Poetry has no purpose beyond itself. It is its own end, as truth is of knowledge, and the good of action. The whole world, its movements, colours and sounds, the forms of nature and of life, can be poetical phenomena. But its essence is that which is concealed in these appearances. The beautiful is what enchants and fascinates by the play of life. . . . The poet is an impressionable, irritable organism, always active, which at the lightest touch gives off electric sparks, suffers more painfully, savours pleasures more fiercely than others, loves more violently, hates with more passion.

And again:

> Literature is the fruit of free inspiration, of the united though not the organised efforts of

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men, which fully expresses the spirit of a people, lives its life, breathes its spirit . . . in its innermost depths and pulsations.

He rejected with passion the notion of art as a social weapon then preached by George Sand and Pierre Leroux:

Do not worry about the incarnation of ideas. If you are a poet, your works will contain them without your knowledge—they will be both moral and national if you follow your inspiration freely.

This is an echo of August Wilhelm Schlegel and his allies. And from this early view Belinsky never retreated. Annenkov says that he looked in art for an "integral" answer to all human needs—to repair the gaps left by other, less adequate forms of experience; that he felt that perpetual return to the great classical works would regenerate and ennoble the reader, that they alone would resolve—by transforming his vision until the true relations of things were revealed—all moral and political problems; provided always that they remained spontaneous and self-subsistent works of art: worlds in themselves, and not the sham structures of moral or social propaganda. Belinsky altered his opinions often and painfully; but to the end of his days he believed that art—and in particular literature—gave the truth to those who sought it; that the purer the artistic impulse—the more purely artistic the work—the clearer and profounder the truth revealed; and he remained faithful to the romantic doctrine that the best and least alloyed art was necessarily the expression not merely of the individual artist but always of a *milieu*, a culture, a nation, whose voice, conscious and unconscious, the artist was, a function without which he became trivial and worthless, and in the context of which alone his own personality possessed any significance. None of this would have been denied by his Slavophil opponents: their disagreements lay elsewhere.

And yet, despite his historicism—common to all romantics—Belinsky does not belong to those whose main purpose and skill consists in a careful critical or historical analysis of artistic phenomena, in relating a work of art or an artist to a precise social background, analysing specific influences upon his work, examining and describing the methods which he uses, providing psychological or historical explanations of the success or failure of the particular effects which he achieves. Belinsky did indeed now and then perform such tasks; and was, in effect, the first and greatest of Russian literary historians. But he detested detail and had no bent for scrupulous scholarship; he read unsystematically and widely; he read and read in a feverish, frantic way until he could bear it no longer, and then he wrote. This gives his writing an unceasing vitality, but it is scarcely the stuff of which balanced scholarship is made. Yet his criticism of the eighteenth century is not as blind and sweeping as his detractors have maintained. His work in assigning their due place to earlier Russian writers (for example, Trediakovsky, Chemnitzer, Lomonosov, Fonvizin, and Dmitriev), and in particular his pages on the poet Derzhavin and the fabulist Krylov, are a model of insight and lucid judgment. And he did kill the reputations of a number of eighteenth century mediocrities and imitators once and for all. But a capacity for lasting literary verdicts is not where his genius lay. His unique quality as a literary critic, the quality which he possessed to a degree scarcely equalled by anyone in the West, is the astonishing freshness and fullness with which he reacts to any and every literary impression, whether of style or of content, and the passionate devotion and scruple with which he reproduces and paints in words the vivid original character, the colour and shape, above all the moral quality of his direct impressions. His life, his whole being, went into the attempt to seize the essence of the literary experience which he was at any given moment trying to convey. He had an exceptional capacity both for understanding and for articulating, but what distinguished him from other, at least in this respect equally gifted, critics, Sainte-Beuve, for example, or Matthew Arnold, was that his vision was wholly direct—there is, as it were, nothing between him and the object. Several of his contemporaries, among them Turgenev,

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noted an almost physical likeness to a hawk or a falcon: and indeed he used to pounce upon a writer like a bird of prey, and tear him limb from limb until he had said all he had to say. His expositions were often too prolix, the style is uneven and sometimes tedious and involved; his education was haphazard, and his words have little elegance and little intrinsic magic. But when he has found himself, when he is dealing with an author worthy of him, whether he is praising or denouncing, speaking of ideas and attitudes to life, or of prosody and idiom, the vision is so intense, he has so much to say, and says it in so first-hand a fashion, the experience is so vivid and conveyed with such uncompromising and uninterrupted force, that the effect of his words is almost as powerful and unsettling today as it was upon his own contemporaries. He himself said that no one could understand a poet or a thinker who did not for a time become wholly immersed in his world, letting himself be dominated by his outlook, identified with his emotions; who did not, in short, try to live through the writer's experiences, beliefs, and convictions. In this way he did in fact "live through" the influence of Shakespeare and Pushkin, Gogol and George Sand, Schiller and Hegel, and as he changed his spiritual domicile he altered his attitude and denounced what he had previously praised, and praised what he had previously denounced. Later critics have accused him of being a chameleon, a sensitive surface which reflected too much and altered too quickly, an unreliable guide, without a permanent core of inner principle, too impressionable, too undisciplined, vivid and eloquent, but without a specific, firm, critical personality, without a definite approach or an identifiable point of view. But this is unjust, and none of his contemporaries who knew him best would have begun to understand such a judgment. If ever there lived a man of rigorous, indeed over-rigorous, and narrow principle, dominated all his life by a remorseless, never-ceasing, fanatical passion for the truth, unable to compromise or adapt himself, even for a short time and superficially, to anything which he did not wholly and utterly believe, it was Belinsky. "If a man does not alter his views about life and art, it is because he is devoted to his own vanity rather than to the truth," he said. Belinsky radically altered his opinions twice, each time after a painful crisis. On each occasion he suffered with an intensity which Russians seem particularly capable of conveying by the use of words, and he gave a full account of it, principally in his letters, the most moving in the Russian language. Those who have read them will know what I mean by the heroic quality of his grimly undeviating, perpetually self-scrutinising, honesty of mind and feeling.

BELINSKY held several intellectual positions in his life, and turned from one to another and exhausted each to the uttermost until, with great tormenting effort, he would liberate himself from it, to begin the struggle over again. He arrived at no final or consistent outlook and the efforts by tidy-minded biographers to divide his thought into three or more distinct "periods," each neatly self-contained and coherent, ignore too many facts: Belinsky is always "relapsing" towards earlier, "abandoned," positions; his consistency was moral not intellectual. He began to philosophize in the mid-thirties of the nineteenth century, as a young man of twenty-three with that disgust and sense of being asphyxiated by the police-state of Nicholas I which all young intellectuals with hearts and consciences felt, and he adopted the philosophy then preached by the young Moscow philosophers, Stankevich and Bakunin, to whose circle he belonged. Idealism was a reaction to the grim suppression which followed the abortive Decembrist Revolt in 1825. The young Russian intellectuals, encouraged as they were to go to Germany rather than to Louis Philippe's dangerously fermenting France, returned full of German metaphysics.* Life on earth, material existence, above all politics, was repulsive but fortunately unimportant. The only thing that mattered was the ideal life created by the

* *vide* "A Marvellous Decade (I)," in ENCOUNTER of June 1955.

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spirit, the great imaginative constructions by means of which man transcended the frustrating material environment, freed himself from its squalor, and identified himself with nature and with God. The history of Western Europe revealed many such sublime achievements, and it was idle nationalistic cant to pretend that Russia had anything to put beside this. Russian culture (so Belinsky in the thirties was telling his readers) was an artificial, imported growth, and till Pushkin arose, could not be spoken of in the same breath as Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, and Schiller, or even such great realistic writers as Walter Scott and (of all writers) Fenimore Cooper. Russian folk-song and *Byliny* and popular epics were more contemptible than even the second- and third-rate imitations of French models which formed the miserable collection of reproductions dignified under the name of national Russian literature. As for the Slavophils, their passion for old Russian ways and manners, for traditional Slav dress and Russian song and dances, for archaic musical instruments, for the rigidities of Byzantine Orthodoxy, their comparison of the spiritual depth and wealth of the Slavs to the decadent and "rotting" west, was destroyed by superstition and sordid materialism, this was childish vanity and delusion. What had Byzantium given? Its direct descendants, the southern Slavs, were among the deadest and dullest of all European nations. If all the Montenegrins died tomorrow, Belinsky cried in one of his reviews, the world would be none the poorer. Compared to one noble voice from the eighteenth century, one Voltaire, one Robespierre, what had Byzantium and Russia to offer? Only the great Peter, and he belonged to the West. As for the glorification of the meek and pious peasant—the holy fool touched with grace—Belinsky, who, unlike the Slavophils, was by birth not a nobleman or a gentleman, but the son of a sodden small-town doctor, looked on agriculture not as romantic and ennobling, but merely as degrading and stupefying. The Slavophils infuriated him by talking romantic and reactionary nonsense in their attempt to arrest scientific progress by appeals to ancient and, as often as not, non-existent traditions. Nothing was more contemptible than false, twopence-coloured nationalism, archaic clothes, a hatred of foreigners, and a desire to undo the great heroic work which Peter the Great had so boldly and magnificently begun. Like the Encyclopædists of the eighteenth century in France, whose temper his much resembled, Belinsky at the beginning of his career (and again towards the end of his life) believed that only an enlightened despot—by enforcing education, technical progress, material civilisation—could rescue the benighted, barbarous Russian nation. In a letter to a friend written in 1837 he writes:

> Above all you should abandon politics and guard yourself against the influence of politics on your ways of thought. Here in Russia, politics has no meaning, and only empty heads can have anything to do with it. If each of the individuals who compose Russia could reach perfection by means of love, Russia would be the happiest country in the world without any politics—education, that is the road to happiness. . . .

and again (in the same letter):

> Peter is clear evidence that Russia will not develop her liberty and her civil structure out of her own resources, but will obtain it at the hands of her Tsars as so much else. True, we do not as yet possess rights—we are, if you like, slaves; but that is because we still need to be slaves. Russia is an infant and needs a nurse in whose breast there beats a heart full of love for her fledgling, and in whose hand there is a rod ready to punish it if it is naughty. To give the child complete liberty is but to ruin it. To give Russia in her present state a constitution is to ruin her. To our people liberty—freedom—simply means licence. The liberated Russian nation would not go to a parliament, but run to the taverns to drink wine, break glass, and hang the gentry because they shave their beards and wear European clothes. . . . The hope of Russia is education, not constitutions and revolutions. . . . France has had two revolutions, and as a result of them a constitution. And in this constitutional France there is far less liberty of thought than in autocratic Prussia.

and again:

> Our autocracy gives us complete freedom of thought and reflection, but limits our freedom to raise our voices and interfere in her affairs. It allows us to import books from abroad which it forbids us to translate or publish. And this is

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right and just, because what you may know the *moujik* may not; an idea which might be good for you, might be fatal to the *moujik*, who would naturally misunderstand it. Wine is good for adults who know what to do with it, but fatal to children, and politics is wine which in Russia may even turn into opium. . . . And so to the devil with the French. Their influence has brought us nothing but harm. We imitated their literature, and killed our own. Germany—that is the Jerusalem of modern humanity.

EVEN the Russian nationalist school did not go so far. At a time when even so Western a thinker as Herzen, not to speak of mild liberals such as Granovsky and Turgenev, were prepared to temporise, and indeed to some degree shared the Slavophils' deep and sincere feeling for the Russian tradition and older forms of life, Belinsky would not bend. Western Europe, more particularly enlightened despotism, was responsible for the major achievement of mankind. There and only there were the forces of life and the critical canons of scientific and philosophical truth, which alone made progress possible. The Slavophils had turned their backs on this, and however worthy their motives, they were blind and leaders of the blind, returning to the ancient slough of ignorant barbarism and weakness from which it had taken the great Peter such efforts to lift, or half-lift, his primitive people; salvation lay in this alone. This doctrine is radical, individualist, enlightened, and anti-democratic. Soviet authors in search of texts to justify the progressive rôle of ruthless governing élites find much to quote from Belinsky's early writings.

Meanwhile Bakunin had begun to preach Hegel to Belinsky, who knew no German. Night after night he preached the new objectivism to him, as he did later in Paris to Proudhon. Finally, after a fearful inner struggle, Belinsky was converted to the new anti-individualist faith. He had earlier toyed with the idealism of Fichte and Schelling, as expounded by Stankevich, the effect of which had been to turn him away from political issues altogether, as a sordid chaos of the trivial, empirical world, a delusive curtain concealing the harmonious reality beyond. This was now finished and done with. He moved to St. Petersburg, and under the influence of his new religion wrote two celebrated articles in 1839–40, one reviewing a poem and a work of prose on an anniversary of the Battle of Burodino, the other a criticism of an attack by a German Hegelian on Goethe. "The real is the rational," the new doctrine had said. It was childish and shallow and short-sighted to attack or seem to alter reality. What is, is, because it must be. To understand it, is to understand the beauty and the harmony of everything as it falls into its own appointed time and place in accordance with intelligible and necessary laws. Everything has its place in the vast scheme of nature unrolling its pattern like a great carpet of history. To criticise is only to show that you are not adjusted to reality and that you do not sufficiently understand it. There were no half-measures for Belinsky. As Herzen once said of him, "Once he finally adopted a view, nothing could deter him. He literally would not stop at anything, neither considerations of moral or social propriety, nor the opinion of others, which might have frightened weaker and less elemental natures. He knew no fear and felt no qualms because he was very strong and sincere, and his conscience was clear." His (or Bakunin's) interpretation of Hegel's doctrine had convinced him that contemplation and understanding was an attitude spiritually superior to that of active fighting, consequently he threw himself into "acceptance of reality" with the same frenzy of passion as that with which only two years later he was to attack the quietists and demand active resistance to Nicholas I's abominations. In 1839–40 Belinsky proclaimed that might was right; that history itself — the march of the inevitable forces — sanctified the actual; that autocracy was, coming when it did, sacred; that Russia was as it was as part of a divine scheme marching towards an ideal goal, that the government—the representative of power and coercion—was wiser than its citizens, that protests against it were frivolous, wicked, and vain. Resistance to cosmic forces is

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always suicidal. "Reality is a monster," he wrote to Bakunin, "with iron talons and immense iron jaws. Sooner or later she will devour everyone who resists her, and cannot live at peace with her. To be free, and instead of a terrible monster to see in her the source of happiness, there is only one means—to know her." And then: "I look upon reality, which I used to hold in such contempt, and tremble with mystic joy, recognising its rationality, realising that nothing of it may be rejected, nothing that is real may be condemned or spurned." And in the same vein: "Schiller used to be my personal enemy. . . . Why? Because his works induced in me a wild hatred of the social order, in the name of a purely abstract ideal of society, cut off from all geographical and historical conditions of development, built in mid-air." This echoes, but in a politically far more sinister form, the relatively harmless maxims of earlier, Fichtean idealism five years before, when he would declare that "Society is always more right than the individual" or "The individual is real and not a phantom only to the degree to which he expresses society."

His friends were stupefied into silence. This was nothing less than a major betrayal by the most singleminded and most fearless of all the radical leaders. The shock was so painful that in Moscow it could scarcely be discussed at all. Belinsky knew precisely what effect his secession would cause, and said so in his letters; nevertheless he saw no way out. He had reached his conclusion by a rational process, and if the choice was between betraying the truth and betraying his friends, he must be man enough to betray his friends. Indeed the thought of the appalling pain that this would cause him somehow merely underlined the inescapable necessity of this great sacrifice to principle. This acceptance of "the iron laws" of social development and the march of history as being not merely inevitable but just, rational, morally liberating, was nevertheless marked, both then and later, by a profound disgust with the conditions of Russian society in general and of his own society in particular. "Our life," he wrote to Constantine Aksakov in 1840,

> what sort of life is it to be? Where is it and what is it about? We are so many individuals outside a society, because Russia is not a society. We possess neither a political nor a religious nor a scientific nor a literary life. Boredom, apathy, frustration, fruitless efforts—that is our life. China is a disgusting state, but more disgusting is a state which possessed rich materials for life but which is held in an iron frame like a rickety child.

And the remedy? Conformity to the powers that be: adjustment to "reality." Like many a Communist of a later date Belinsky glorified in the very weight of the chains with which he had chosen to bind his limbs, in the very narrowness and darkness which he had willed to suffer; the shock and disgust of his friends was itself evidence of the vastness, and therefore of the grandeur and the moral necessity, of the sacrifice. There is no ecstasy to compare to that of self-immolation.

THIS condition lasted for a year, and then he could bear it no longer. Herzen paid a visit to him in St. Petersburg; it had begun in a frigid and awkward manner, and then in a great burst of emotion Belinsky broke down, and admitted that the Hegelian year, with its wilful "acceptance," and glorification of the black reaction of the régime was a heavy nightmare, an offering upon the altar not of truth but of an insane logical consistency. What he cared about, what he had never ceased to care about, was not the historical process or the condition of the universe or the solemn march of the Hegelian God through the world, but the lives and liberties and aspirations of individual men and women whose sufferings no sublime universal harmony could explain away or redeem. From that moment he never looked back. The relief was immense:

> I abominate [he wrote to Botkin] my contemptible desire to reconcile myself with a contemptible reality. Long live the great Schiller, noble advocate of humanity, bright star of salvation, the emancipator of society from the blood-stained prejudices of tradition. "Long live reason, and may the darkness perish," as great

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Pushkin used to exclaim! The human personality is now above history, above society, above humanity for me; good Lord, it frightens me to think of what must have been happening to me—fever, madness—I feel like a convalescent now. . . . You speak of life and happiness with reverence, without irony, with a kind of faith. . . . I wildly and terribly disagree with you: I will not make my peace or adjust myself to vile realities. I look for happiness only in the world of fancy, only fantasies make me happy. . . . As for reality—reality is an executioner. . . .

I am tormented by the thought of the pleasures I have let go because of the contemptible idealism and feebleness of my character. God knows what vile, revolting nonsense I have talked in print, with all the sincerity and fanaticism of deep, wild conviction . . . what a terrible price I have had to pay, what fearful blunders I have had to commit for the sake of truth, and what a bitter truth it is—how vile the world is, especially in our neighbourhood. What horrible zigzags my path towards truth seems to involve.

And *à propos* the inexorable march of the Spirit: "So it is not for myself that I create, but for the Spirit—really what kind of a fool does it take me for? I'd rather not think at all . . . what do I care about *Its* consciousness?" And there follow lines in which such sacred metaphysical entities as Universality — Cosmic Consciousness — the Spirit — the rational State, etc. are denounced as a Moloch of abstraction devouring living human beings.

A year later he finally settled accounts with the master himself:

All Hegel's talk about morality is utter nonsense, since in the objective realm there is nothing good or bad. . . . Even if I attained to the actual top of the ladder of human development, I should at that point still have to ask you [Hegel] to account for all the victims of life and of history, all the victims of accident and superstition, of the Inquisition and Philip II, and so on and so forth; otherwise I will throw myself off head downwards. . . . I am told that disharmony is a condition of harmony. This may be found agreeable by musical persons, but is not quite so satisfactory from the point of view of those whose fate it is to express in their lives the element of disharmony.

And in the same year he tries to explain the aberration:

Because we understood that for us there is no life in real life, and because our nature was such that without life we could not live, we ran away into the world of books, and began to live and to love according to books, and made life and love a kind of occupation, a kind of work, an anxious labour. . . . In the end we bored and irritated and maddened each other. . . . Now I say that to be social is everything. What is it to me that something universal lives, so long as the individual suffers, that solitary genius should live in heaven, while the common herd rolls in the mud? What is it to me if I do apprehend the essence of art or religion or history, if I cannot share this with all those who should be my human brothers, my brethren in Christ, but are in fact strangers and enemies because of their ignorance? . . . I cannot bear the sight of barefoot boys playing in the gutter, the poor in tatters, the drunken cab-driver, the broken soldier, the official padding along with a portfolio under his arm, the self-satisfied Army officer, the haughty nobleman. When I give a penny to a soldier or a beggar I almost cry, I run from him as if I had done something terrible, as if I did not wish to hear the sound of my own steps. Has a man the right to forget himself in art or science, while *this* goes on?

And a month later:

And oh the mad nonsense which I have poured out against the French, an energetic and noble nation, now shedding its blood for the most sacred rights of mankind. I have awoken and recollect my dreams with horror. . . .

HE READ the materialist Feuerbach and became a revolutionary democrat, denouncing tyranny, ignorance, and the bestial lives of his fellow countrymen with ever-increasing ferocity. After his escape from the spell of a half-understood German metaphysics he felt a sense of extreme liberation. As always the reaction took an external form and poured itself out in passionate pæans to individualism. In a letter to his friend Botkin he denounced his intellectual *milieu* for its lack of seriousness and personal dignity:

We are the unhappy Anarcharsises of the new Scythia. Why do we all gape, yawn, bustle, and hurry and take an interest in everything and stick to nothing, and consume everything and remain hungry? We used to love one another, we loved warmly and deeply, and how did we show our friendship? We used to be tremendously excited about one another, enthusiastic, ecstatic, we hated one another, we wondered about each other, we despised one another.

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When separated from each other for long we pined and wept salt tears at the mere thought of meeting, we were sick with love and affection: when we met, our meetings were cold and oppressive, and we would separate without regret. . . . That is how it was, and it is time that we stopped deceiving ourselves. . . . Our learned professors are pedants, a mass of social corruption. We are orphans, men without a country. . . . How much more enchanting is the ancient world . . . its life contains the seed of everything that is great, noble, valiant, because the foundation of its life is personal pride; the dignity and sanctity of the individual.

There follows an ecstatic comparison of Schiller to Tiberius Gracchus and of himself to Marat. "The individual personality is the point on which I am ready to go off my head. I am trying to love mankind *à la Marat*—to make the smaller portion of mankind happy I am ready, I do believe, to destroy the rest by fire and sword." He loves only the Jacobins—only they are effective:

"The two-edged sword of word and deed—the Robespierres and the St. Justs . . . not the sugary ecstasies, the pretty idealism of the Gironde," and this leads to socialism—of that pre-Marxist, "utopian" kind, which Belinsky embraced before he understood it, because of its promise of equality: "Socialism—the alpha and omega of faith and science—idea of ideas, essence of essences . . . the day will come when nobody will be burnt alive, have his head chopped off . . . no rich, no poor, no kings, no subjects—only brothers." It is this mystical vision that Dostoevsky had in mind when a good many years after Belinsky's death he said that socialism for him meant "a completely regenerated world—this time built on wholly new and adamantine foundations. Belinsky was the first man to tell Dostoevsky, then still young and obscure, that in his *Poor Folk* he had done in one stroke what the critics vainly tried to do in lengthy essays—he had revealed the life of the grey, humiliated, Russian minor official as nobody had even done before; but he disliked Dostoevsky personally and detested his Christian convictions, and deliberately scandalised him by violent atheistic and blasphemous tirades. His attitude to religion was that of Holbach or Diderot and for the same reasons: "In the words God and Religion I see only black darkness, chains and the knout."

In 1847 Gogol, whose genius Belinsky had acclaimed, published a violently anti-liberal and anti-Western tract, calling for a return to ancient patriarchal ways, a spiritually regenerated land of serfs, landlords, the Czar. The cup brimmed over. In a letter written from abroad Belinsky, in the last stages of his wasting disease, accused Gogol of betraying the light:

Yes, I loved you, with all the passion of which a man tied by ties of blood to his country loves its hope, its glory, its pride, the great leaders of its development and progress. But I cannot be silent when religion and the whip are substituted for truth and virtue. Russia sees her salvation not in mysticism, or æstheticism, or piety, but in the achievements of education, civilisation, and humane culture. She has no need of sermons (she has heard too many), nor of prayers (she has mumbled them too often), but the awakening in the people of a feeling of human dignity, lost for so many ages in mud and filth. It needs laws and rights in accordance not with the teachings of the church, but with those of common sense and justice. Instead of which she offers the terrible spectacle of a land where men buy and sell other men without even the cant of the Americans, who say that negroes are not men; a country where there are no guarantees of personal liberty or honour or property; not even a police state, only huge corporations of official thieves and robbers. The government knows well what the landlords do to their peasants, and how many landlords are massacred by their serfs every year. . . . Yes, you must indeed be sick, preacher of the whip, apostle of ignorance, champion of obscurantism and dark ignorance, defender of a Tartar way of life. Look at the ground beneath your feet. You are standing on the edge of an abyss. You found your teachings upon the Orthodox Church, and that I understand, for the Church has always favoured whips and prisons, it has always grovelled to despotism. But what has this to do with Christ? Of course a Voltaire whose ridicule put out the flames of fanaticism and illiteracy in Europe is far more a son of Christ, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone, than all your parsons, bishops, Patriarchs, Metropolitans. Our country priests are the heroes of rude, popular tales, the priest is always the glutton, the miser, the sycophant, the man lost to all sense of shame. Our clergy are either pedantic schoolmen, or else appallingly

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ignorant and blind. Only our literature, in spite of a barbarous censorship, shows signs of life and forward movement. That is why the calling of the writer is so honoured among us, why even a small literary gift makes for success; that is why the profession of letters has thrown into the shade the glitter of epaulettes and uniforms; that is why a liberal writer, even one whose capacity is poor, excites a degree of general attention not given to more talented men who sell their gifts to serve the Orthodox Church, autocracy and nationalism. The Russian people is right. It sees in writers of Russia its only leaders, defenders, and saviours from Russian autocracy, orthodoxy, and nationalism. It can forgive a bad book but not a harmful one.

He read this letter to his friends in Paris. "This is a work of genius," Herzen said in a low voice to Annenkov, who records the scene, "and I think his last will and testament." This celebrated document became the bible of Russian revolutionaries. Indeed it is for reading it to an illicit discussion circle that Dostoevsky was condemned to death, then sent to Siberia.

BELINSKY in his final phase was a humanist, an enemy of theology and metaphysics, and a radical democrat, and by the extreme force and vehemence of his convictions turned purely literary disputes into the beginnings of social and political movements. Turgenev said of him that there are two types of writer: a writer may be brilliantly imaginative and creative, but remain on the periphery of the collective experience of the society to which he belongs. Or he may live at the centre of his society, being connected "organically" with the emotions and state of mind of his community. Belinsky knew, as only true social critics do, where the centre of moral gravity of a book, an opinion, an author, a movement, an entire society, could be found. The central issue of Russian society was not political but social and moral. The intelligent and awakened Russian wanted above all to be told what to do, how to live as an individual, as a private person. Turgenev testifies that never were people more interested in the problems of life, and never less in those of pure æsthetic theory, than in the forties and fifties. The mounting repression made literature the only medium within which any degree of free discussion of social questions could take place. Indeed the great controversy between Slavophils and "Westerners," between the view of Russia as a still uncorrupted spiritual and social organism, bound by impalpable links of common love, natural piety, and reverence for authority, to which the application of artificial, "soulless," western forms and institutions had done, and would do, fearful damage; and, on the other hand, the view of it held by the "Westerners" as a retarded semi-Asiatic despotism lacking even the rudiments of social justice and individual liberty —this crucial debate, which split educated Russians in the nineteenth century, was carried on principally in the semi-disguise of literary and philosophical argument. The authorities viewed neither side with favour, and, with some justice, regarded public discussion of any serious issue as in itself a menace to the régime. Nevertheless the effective techniques of suppression, as we know them now, had not as yet been invented; and the half-clandestine controversy continued, sharpened and rendered more personal by the acute consciousness of their own social origins which infected the opinions and quality of feeling of the principal adversaries themselves.

Russia, in Belinsky's day, in the 1830's and the 1840's, was still, in the main, a feudal society. It was pre-industrial and, in certain parts of it, semi-colonial. The state was based on sharply drawn divisions which separated the peasantry from the merchants and from the lower clergy, and there was a still wider gap which divided the gentry from the nobility. It was not altogether impossible, although it was very difficult and very uncommon, to rise from a lower to a higher stratum. But in order to do this a man had to have not merely exceptional energy, exceptional ambition and talent, but also a certain willingness and capacity to jettison his past and to identify himself morally, socially, and mentally with the higher *milieu*, which on certain terms, if he tried hard enough, might be prepared to receive and assimilate him.

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The most remarkable Russian in the eighteenth century, the father of polite letters and of the natural sciences in his country, Mihailo Lomonosov—"The Russian Leonardo"—was a man of obscure and humble origin, but he rose and was transformed. There is a good deal that is robust and vigorous, but nothing primitive, no trace of a rustic accent in his writing. He had all the zeal of a convert and a self-taught one at that, and did more than anyone to establish the formal conventions of Russian literary prose and verse in the later eighteenth century, rigorously modelled on the most elaborate European—that is to say French — practice of the time. Until the second quarter of the nineteenth century the social élite alone possessed enough education, leisure, and trained taste to pursue the fine arts, and in particular literature: they looked to the mandarins of the West, and borrowed little—at most here and there a touch of local colour—from the traditional arts and crafts still practised with skill and imagination by peasants and artisans in forgotten corners of the great empire. Literature was an elegant accomplishment and was practised largely by aristocratic dilettanti and their protégés in St. Petersburg, and to a lesser extent in Moscow—the first the seat of the government, the second the home of wealthy merchants and of the more solid and old-fashioned nobility, who looked with distaste on the chilly and sophisticated atmosphere of the Europeanised capital. The most characteristic names in the first generation of the great literary renaissance—Karamzin and Zhukovsky, Pushkin and Griboyedov, Baratynsky and Venevitinov, Vyazemsky and Shakhovskoy, Ryleyev and both Odoevskys—belong to this social stratum. A few individuals from outside were, indeed, permitted to enter: the critic and journalist Polevoy, the pioneer of literary naturalism in Russia, was the son of a merchant in Siberia; the lyrical poet Koltzov was a peasant to the end of his days. But such exceptions did not greatly affect the established literary hierarchy. The socially humble Polevoy, after beginning bravely enough as a *frondeur* against the élite, gradually assimilated himself completely to the style and methods of the dominant group, and ended his life (it is true, after persecution by the authorities) as a tame and frightened supporter of the Orthodox Church and the autocratic government. Koltzov, who retained his country idiom to the end, achieved fame precisely as such—as a primitive of genius, the simple peasant unspoilt by fame who charmed the sophisticated *salons* by the freshness and spontaneity of his gifts, and touched his well-born admirers by the almost exaggerated humility of his manner, and by his unhappy and self-effacing life.

BELINSKY broke this tradition and broke it for ever. This he did because he entered the company of his social superiors on his own terms—without surrendering anything. He was an uncouth provincial when he arrived in Moscow, and he retained many of the tastes, prejudices, and habits of his class to the end of his life. He was born in poverty and bred in the atmosphere, at once bleak and coarse, of an obscure country town in a backward province. Moscow did, to some degree, soften and civilise him, but there remained to the end a core of crudeness, and a self-conscious, rough, sometimes aggressive tone in his writing. This tone enters Russian literature, never to leave it. Throughout the nineteenth century it is the distinguishing characteristic of the political radicals impatient of the urbanity of the non-political or conservative intelligentsia. As the revolutionary movement grew in intensity, this note becomes by turns strident and violent, or muted and ominous. Its use gradually became a matter of principle: a weapon deliberately employed by the intellectual *sans culottes* against the supporters of the established order, the rude and defiant tone of the leaders of the underprivileged and oppressed, determined to do away once and for all with the polite fictions which merely conceal the deadness, futility, and above all the heartless wickedness of the prevailing system. Belinsky spoke with this accent because this kind of harshness was natural to him, because he was widely-read but half-educated, violently emotional, and

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unrestrained by conventional breeding or a naturally moderate temper, liable to storms of moral indignation, constantly boiling and protesting and crying out against iniquity or falsehood without regard to time or place or company. His followers adopted his manner because they were the party of the *enragés*, and this became the traditional accent of the new truth which had to be spoken with anger, with a sense of freshly suffered insult.

In this sense the real heir of Belinsky is the "nihilist" Bazarov in Turgenev's *Fathers and Children*. When the cultivated but insufferable uncle in that novel, who stands for elegant manners and Pushkin and an æsthetic view of life (with which Turgenev himself feels to some degree identified, although not without a sense of guilt), enquires why the dissection of frogs and the other sordid paraphernalia of modern anatomy should be regarded as so supremely interesting or important, Bazarov replies with deliberate harshness and arrogance that this is so because they are "true." This kind of violent *boutade*, asserting the primacy of the material facts of life and nature, became the official battle cry of the rebellious section of the intelligentsia, and it became a duty not merely to tell the unpalatable truth but to say it as loudly, as harshly, as disagreeably as possible, to trample with excessive brutality upon the delicate æsthetic values of the older generation, to employ shock tactics. The enemy was numerous, powerful, and well-entrenched, and therefore the cause of truth could not triumph without wholesale destruction of his defence works, however valuable or attractive they might be in themselves. Belinsky did not himself develop this attitude to its fullest and most destructive extent, although Bakunin had begun to do so in his lifetime; he was too sensitive to artistic experience as such, too deeply under the spell of literary genius, whether it came from a radical or a reactionary source, and too honest to practise ruthlessness for its own sake. But the unbending, puritanical attitude to the truth, and particularly the passion for the seamy, the unmentionable side of everything, the insistence on asserting it at whatever cost, at whatever sacrifice of literary or social amenities, and consequently a certain exaggerated emphasis on angular, blunt, unambiguous terms calculated to provoke some kind of sharp reaction—that came from him and him alone, and it altered the style and content of the great political and artistic controversies of the hundred years which have passed since his death.

In the polite, elegant, spirited, gay, socially accomplished society of the intellectuals of Moscow and Petersburg he continued to speak, indeed at times to shout, in his own dissonant idiom, and remained independent, violent, maladjusted, and, indeed, what later came to be called "class-conscious," to the end of his days; and he was felt to be a profoundly disturbing figure for precisely this reason, an unassimilable outsider, a dervish, a moral fanatic, a man whose unbridled behaviour threatened the accepted conventions upon which a civilised literary and artistic world rested. He secured this independence at a cost; he over-developed the harsher side of his nature, and sometimes flung off needlessly crude judgments, he was too intolerant of refinement and fastidiousness as such, too suspicious of the merely beautiful, and was sometimes artistically and morally blinded by the violence of his own moral dogmatism. But his individuality was so strong, the power of his words so great, his motives so pure and so intense, that (as I said before) the very roughness and clumsiness of his style created its own tradition of literary sincerity. This tradition of protest and revolt is of a quality wholly different from that of the well-born and well-bred radicals of the forties who shook and in the end destroyed the classical aristocratic façade of the "Augustan age" of Russian literature. The circle—or the two overlapping circles—in which he moved, in his day still consisted principally of the sons of land-owning squires. But in due course this aristocratic opposition gave way to more violent figures drawn from the middle class and the proletariat. Of these latter Belinsky is the greatest and most direct ancestor.

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Those left-wing writers of a later day inevitably tended to imitate the defects of his qualities, and in particular the brutal directness and carelessness of his diction as a measure of their own contempt for the careful and often exquisite taste of the polite *belles lettres* against which they were in such hot rebellion. But whereas the literary crudities of such radical critics of the sixties as Chernyshevsky or Pisarev were deliberate—a conscious weapon in the war for materialism and the natural sciences, and against the ideals of pure art, refinement, and the cultivation of æsthetic, non-utilitarian attitudes to personal and social questions—Belinsky's case is more painful and more interesting. He was not a crude materialist, and certainly not a utilitarian. He believed in his critical calling as an end valuable in itself. He wrote as he spoke in shapeless, over-long, awkward, hurrying, tangled sentences only because he possessed no better means of expression; because that was the natural medium in which he felt and thought.

Let me remind you once again that Russian writing for several decades, before and after Pushkin, practised as it was almost exclusively by the "awakened" members of the upper and upper-middle class, drew on foreign, principally French and later German sources, and was marked with an altogether exceptional sensibility to style and subtlety of feeling. Belinsky's preoccupations, for all his insight into the process of artistic creation, were predominantly social and moral. He was a preacher, he preached with fervour, and could not always control the tone and accent of his utterance. He wrote, as he spoke, with a grating, occasionally shrill intonation, and Pushkin's friends—æsthetes and mandarins—instinctively recoiled from this noisy, frantically excited, half-educated vulgarian. Belinsky, whose admiration of their magnificent achievement was wholehearted and boundless, felt (as so often) wounded and socially humiliated. But he could not alter his nature, nor could he alter or modify or pass over the truth as he saw it, painfully, but, from time to time, with overwhelming clearness. His pride was great, and he was dedicated to a cause; the cause was that of the unadorned truth, and in her service he would live and die.

The literary élite, the friends of Pushkin, the Arzamas group as they were called, despite radical ideas acquired abroad in the victorious war against Napoleon, despite the Decembrist interlude, was on the whole conservative, if not always politically, yet in social habits and temper; it was connected with the Court and the Army and deeply patriotic. Belinsky, to whom this seemed a retrograde outlook, a sin against the light of science and education, was convinced that Russia had more to learn from the technologically progressive West than to teach it, that the Slavophil movement was a romantic illusion, and, in its extreme form, blind nationalistic megalomania, that western arts and sciences and forms of civilised life offered the first and only hope of lifting Russia from her backward state. Herzen, Bakunin, Granovsky, believed this too, of course. But then they had had a semi-western education, and found it both easy and agreeable to travel and live abroad and to enter into social and personal relations with civilised Frenchmen or Germans. Even the Slavophils who spoke of the West as worthless and decadent were delighted by their visits to Berlin or Baden-Baden or Oxford or even Paris itself.

Belinsky, who intellectually was so ardent a Westerner, was emotionally more deeply and unhappily Russian than any of his contemporaries, spoke no foreign languages, could not breathe freely in any environment save that of Russia, and felt miserable and persecution-ridden abroad. He found Western culture worthy of respect and emulation, but Western habits of life were to him personally quite insufferable. He began to sigh bitterly for home as soon as he had left his native shore on a sea voyage to Germany; the Sistine Madonna and the wonders of Paris did not comfort him; after a month abroad he was almost insane with nostalgia. In a very real sense he embodied the uncompromising elements of a Slav temperament and way of life

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to a sharper degree than his friends and contemporaries — whether like Turgenev they felt contented in Germany and Paris and unhappy in Russia, or, like the Slavophils, wore traditional Russian dress and secretly preferred a poem by Goethe or a tragedy by Schiller to any number of ancient Russian ballads or Slav Chronicles. This deep inner conflict between intellectual beliefs and emotional, sometimes almost physical, needs, is a characteristically Russian disease. As the nineteenth century developed, and as the struggle between social classes became sharper and more articulate, the contradiction, which tormented Belinsky, emerged more clearly. The Marxists or agrarian socialists or anarchists, when they are not noblemen or university professors, that is to say, to some degree professionally members of an international society, make their bow with great conviction and sincerity to the West in the sense that they believe in its civilisation, above all its sciences, its techniques, its political thought and practice, but when they are forced to emigrate, find life abroad more agonising than other exiles. Herzen, Bakunin, Turgenev, Lavrov, were by birth gentlemen, and lived abroad, if not happily, at any rate without becoming embittered specifically by contact with it. Herzen did not greatly love Switzerland and he disliked Twickenham and London a great deal, but he preferred either to St. Petersburg under Nicholas I, and he was happy in the society of his French and Italian friends. Turgenev seemed more than contented on Madame Viardot's estate at Bougival. But Belinsky can no more be thought of as a voluntary *émigré* than Dr. Johnson or Cobbett. He stormed and ranted and denounced the most sacrosanct Russian institutions, but he did not leave his country. And although he must have known that imprisonment and slow and painful death were inevitable if he persisted, he did not, and obviously could not for a moment, contemplate emigrating beyond the frontiers of the Russian empire: the Slavophils and the reactionaries were the enemy, but the battle could be fought only on native soil. He could not be silent and he would not go abroad. His head was with the West, but his heart and his ill-kept body were with the mass of inarticulate peasants and small traders—the "poor folk" of Dostoevsky, the inhabitants of the teeming world of Gogol's terrible comic imagination. "The Slavophils and we were a kind of Janus," said Herzen, speaking of the Westerners: "We had two heads facing in opposite directions, but the same heart beat in us all."

Belinsky was not torn between incompatible ideals. He was an integrated personality in the sense that he believed in his own feelings, and was therefore free from the self-pity and the sentimentality which springs from indulgence in feelings which one does not respect in oneself. But there was a division within him which arose from a simultaneous admiration for western values and ideals, and a profound lack of sympathy with, indeed dislike and lack of respect for, the characters and form of life of the western bourgeoisie and typical western intellectuals. This ambivalence of feeling, created by history—by the social and psychological conditions which formed the Russian intellectuals in the nineteenth century—was inherited by and became prominent in the next generation of radical intellectuals — in Chernyshevsky and Nekrasov, in the Populist Movement, in the assassins of Alexander II, and indeed in Lenin too, Lenin who could not be accused of ignoring or despising the contributions of western culture, but felt far more alien in London or Paris than the more "normal" type of international exile. To some degree this peculiar amalgam of love and hate is still intrinsic to Russian feelings about Europe: on the one hand, intellectual respect, envy, admiration, desire to emulate and excel; on the other, emotional hostility, suspicion, and contempt, a sense of being clumsy, *de trop*, of being outsiders; leading, as a result, to an alternation between excessive self-prostration before, and aggressive flouting of, Western values. No visitor to the Soviet Union can have failed to remark something of this phenomenon: a combination of intellectual inadequacy and emotional superiority, a sense of the West as enviably self-restrained,

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clever, efficient, and successful: but also as being cramped, cold, mean, calculating, and fenced in, without capacity for large views or generous emotion, for feeling which must, at times, rise too high and overflow its banks, for heedless self-abandonment in response to some unique historical challenge, and consequently condemned never to know a rich flowering of life.

THIS spontaneity of feeling and passionate idealism are in themselves sufficient to distinguish Belinsky from his more methodical disciples. Unlike later radicals, he was not himself a utilitarian, least of all where art was concerned. Towards the end of his life he pleaded for a wider application of science, and more direct expression in art. But he never believed that it was the duty of the artist to prophesy or to preach—to serve society directly by telling it what to do, by providing slogans, by putting its art in the service of a specific programme. This was the view of Chernyshevsky and Nekrasov in the sixties; of Lunacharsky and Mayakovsky and Soviet critics today. Belinsky, like Gorky, believed in the duty of the artist to tell the truth as he alone, being uniquely qualified to see and to utter, sees it and can say it; that this is the whole duty of a writer whether he be a thinker or an artist. Moreover he believed that since man lives in society, and is largely made by society, this truth must necessarily be largely social, and that, for this reason, all forms of insulation and escape from environment must, to that degree, be falsifications of the truth, and treason to it. For him the man and the artist and the citizen are one; and whether you write a novel, or a poem, or a work of history or philosophy, or an article in a newspaper, or compose a symphony or a picture, you are, or should be, expressing the whole of your nature, not merely a professionally trained part of it, and you are morally responsible as a man for what you do as an artist. You must always bear witness to the truth, which is one and indivisible, in every act and in every word. There are no purely æsthetic truths or æsthetic canons. Truth, beauty, morality, are attributes of life and cannot be abstracted from it, and what is intellectually false or morally ugly cannot be artistically beautiful, or vice versa. He believed that human existence was—or should be—a perpetual and desperate war between truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, in which no man had the right to be neutral or have relations with the enemy, least of all the artist. He declared war on the official nationalists because they suppressed and distorted or coloured the facts: and this was thought unpatriotic. He denounced copybook sentiments, and with a certain brutality of expression tried to formulate the crude truth behind them, and that was thought cynical. He admired first the German romantics, then only their radical wing, and then the French socialists, and was thought subversive. He told the Slavophils that inner self-improvement and spiritual regeneration cannot occur on an empty stomach, nor in a society which lacks social justice and suppresses elementary rights, and this was thought materialistic.

His life and personality became a myth. He lived as an idealised, severe, and morally immaculate figure in the hearts of so many of his contemporaries that, after mention of his name was once again tolerated by the authorities, they vied with each other in composing glowing epitaphs to his memory. He established the relation of literature to life in a manner which even writers not at all sympathetic to his point of view, such as Leskov and Goncharov and Turgenev, all of whom in some sense pursued the ideal of pure art, were forced to recognise; they might reject his doctrine, but they were forced by the power of his invisible presence into having to settle accounts with him—if they did not, like Dostoevsky or Gogol, follow him, they at least felt it necessary to explain themselves on this matter. No one felt this need more acutely than Turgenev. Pulled one way by Flaubert, another by the awful apparition of his dead friend which perpetually arose before him, Turgenev vainly tried to placate both, and so spent much of his life in persuading himself and his Russian public that his position was not morally indefensible, and involved no betrayals or evasions. This search

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for one's proper place in the moral and the social universe continued as a central tradition in Russian literature virtually until the revolt in the nineties of the neo-classicist æsthetes and the symbolists under Ivanov and Balmont, Annensky and Blok. But these movements, splendid as their fruit was, did not last long as an effective force. And the Soviet revolution returned, albeit in a crude and distorted utilitarian form, to the canons of Belinsky and the social criteria of art.

MANY things have been said against Belinsky, particularly by the opponents of naturalism, and some of them it is difficult to deny. He was wildly erratic, and all his enthusiasm and seriousness and integrity do not make up for lapses of insight or intellectual power. He declared that Dante was not a poet; that Fenimore Cooper was the equal of Shakespeare; that *Othello* was the product of a barbarous age; that Pushkin's poem *Russlan and Lyudmila* was "infantile," that his *Tales of Belkin* and *Fairy Tales* were worthless, and Tatiana in *Eugenii Onegin* "a moral embryo." There are equally wild remarks about Racine and Corneille and Balzac and Hugo. Some of these are due to irritation caused by the pseudo-medievalism of the Slavophils, some to an over-sharp reaction against his old master Nadezhdin and his school which laid down that it was inartistic to deal with what is dark or ugly or monstrous, when life and nature contain so much that is beautiful and harmonious; but it is mostly due to sheer critical blindness. He did damn the magnificent poet Baratynsky out of hand, and erased a gifted minor contemporary of Pushkin—the lyrical poet Benediktov—out of men's minds for half a century, for no better reason than that he disliked mere delicacy without moral fervour. And he began to think that he was mistaken in proclaiming the genius of Dostoevsky who was perhaps no more than an exasperating religious neurotic with persecution mania. His criticism is very uneven. His essays in artistic theory, despite good pages, seem arid and artificial and conceived under the influence of procrustean German systems, alien to his concrete, impulsive, and direct sense of life and art. He wrote and talked a very great deal, and said far too much about too many unrelated things, and too often spoke incoherently and naïvely, with the uncritical exaggeration and half-baked dogmatism of an autodidact—"Always in a dither of excitement, always frantic, always hurrying," falling and rising and stumbling on, sometimes pathetically ill-equipped, hurrying desperately wherever the battle between truth and falsehood, life and death, seemed most critical. He was the more erratic because he took pride in what seemed to him freedom from petty qualities, from neatness and tidiness and scholarly accuracy, from careful judgment and knowing how far to go. He could not bear the cautious, the morally timid, the intellectually genteel, the avoiders of crises, the *bien pensant* seekers of compromise, and attacked them in long and clumsy periods full of fury and contempt. Perhaps he was too intolerant, and morally lop-sided, and overplayed his own feelings. He need not, perhaps, have hated Goethe quite so much for his, to him, maddening serenity, or the whole of Polish literature for being Polish and in love with itself. And these are not accidental blemishes, they are the defects inherent in everything that he is and stands for. To dislike them overmuch is ultimately to condemn his positive attitude too. His great claim resides precisely in his lack of, and, conscious opposition to, artistic detachment: for he saw in literature the expression of everything that men have felt and thought and have had to say about life and society, their central attitude to man's situation and to the world, the justification of their whole life and activity, and consequently looked on it with the deepest possible concern. He abandoned no view, however eccentric, until he had tried it out on himself as it were, until he had "lived himself" through it, and paid the price in nervous waste and a sense of inadequacy, and sometimes, total failure. He put truth, however fitfully glimpsed, however dull or bleak it might turn out to be, so far above other aims that he communicated a sense of its sanctity

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to others and thereby transformed the standards of criticism in Russia.

Because his consuming passion was confined to literature and books, he attached immense importance to the appearance of new ideas, new literary methods, above all new concepts of the relation of literature and life. Because he was naturally responsive to everything that was living and genuine, he transformed the concept of the critic's calling in his native country. The lasting effect of his work was in altering, and altering crucially and irretrievably, the moral and social outlook of the leading younger writers and thinkers of his time. He altered the quality and the tone both of the experience and of the expression of so much Russian thought and feeling that his rôle as a dominant social influence overshadows his attainments as a literary critic. Every age has its official preachers and prophets who castigate its vices and call to a better life. Yet it is not by them that its deepest *malaise* is revealed, but in the artists and thinkers dedicated to the more painful and difficult task of creation, description and analysis—it is they, the poets, the novelists, the critics—who live through the moral agony of their society in their own personal experience; and it is they, their victories and their defeats, that affect the fate of their generation and leave the most authentic testimony of the battle itself for the benefit of interested posterity. Nekrasov was a very gifted poet, but before everything he was a preacher and a propagandist of genius; consequently it was not he but Belinsky who first saw the central issue and saw it more clearly and directly and simply than anyone would ever see it again. Nor did the thought ever seem to arise in his mind that it might be possible not to face it with all its implications, to practise caution, to be more circumspect in one's choice of a moral and political position, or perhaps even to retire to a neutral and disinterested attitude above the din of the battle. "Belinsky was not timid, because he was strong and sincere. His conscience was clear." It is because he committed himself so violently and irrevocably to a very specific vision of the truth, and to a very specific set of moral principles to govern both thought and action, at a price which grew greater continually to himself and those who chose to follow him, that his life and his outlook alternately appalled and inspired the generation which came after him. No final verdict had been declared upon him in his own lifetime. Not even official canonisation in his native country has finally laid the ghost of his doubts and torments or stilled his indignant voice. The issues on which he spent his life are today more alive —and in consequence of revolutionary forces which he himself did so much to set in motion—more pressing and more threatening than ever before.

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Elizabeth Hardwick

Portrait of a New York Lady

THIS is not her story—it is a character sketch. Perhaps people with a single, dominating passion do not have a story; instead, they *are*; they have their being as nakedly and immutably as the course of nature. With them question and answer are one. The beginning, the middle, and the end are all the same.

In death she was brought back to Virginia and there she lay in her coffin, attended at the last by her banker and by one of her protégés who had, lagging, betraying spirit, many years ago given up doing window displays for Bonwit Teller and returned home to become a mortician.

Dear, dear Mary Price Kimbrough—extraordinary creature who loved a coddled egg, walked in her large T-strap shoes over the streets of New York City with such confidence the pavements might have been her own acres. Who could look this charging woman in the eye? Little children used to think she had the blood of buffaloes in her veins. She was rare, but not at all comfortable. A large black pearl in the jewel box of the great world: that was the sort of epithet Mary Price Kimbrough might have used for herself. She loved the union of well-worn, conservative splendour and just that touch of sentiment, that hint of tenderness so necessary to one whose usual style of behaviour is the abrupt and frank. A golden light fell over her coffin. The large lamp was shaded with soft, sad, yellow parchment, bordered by a rosy Chinese pattern and she was rightly placed in the yellow, rosy light. For the last time the fantastic face was exposed to view; the old, displeasing person reigned for still another moment as she lay in state in her father's house.

Her fame, her rarity were not just in the memorable clip of her black hair. Passed away? Impossible! Virginia neighbours said, sighing and frowning at the notion. Who can believe this is all there is to be of the great Mary Price Kimbrough? Great for what? For what! Why, for this: she lived for over thirty years at the Ritz-Carlton in New York! The destruction of that hotel was very nearly her own end, but gamely she moved on to the St. Regis, bearing the displacement sadly and silently, like royalty in exile. All those thirty years she had lived at the Ritz-Carlton with her own maid and from this great station she took in the plays and parties of the season, met stars and those hoping to become stars, ate French chocolates and offered her opinions. The general feeling was that this life was a considerable achievement for one of the homeliest women the South had ever produced, one of those truly stark natures, odd and self-absorbed and inconvenient in the manner of some large, expensive machine which went on awkwardly, laboriously functioning.

"Don't forget to look up Mary Price Kimbrough. She knows everyone in New York!" This was the theme, the repeated chorus by

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which her name was kept alive to new generations. Sometimes when she returned to Virginia in the summers she would bring guests from the city; men in shorts and woven sandals, naked knee and bare toe showing, appeared on the lawn in July; women in white sun-bathing costumes could be seen fanning themselves and drinking Coca-Cola. These visitors were not introduced around and indeed it was not every summer that even Mary Price herself turned up. To the eyes secretly examining these gatherings from nearby windows the guests did not give the impression of being poor, unconventional artists. Mary Price liked people who were doing well and could pay their own way. If the visitors sometimes dressed peculiarly it seemed to mean only that they were city people with strange ideas of the South; perhaps they confused the place with Florida or the beaches of Honolulu.

"Yes, look up Mary Price. If she takes to you, anything can happen." With this advice, or more accurately this privilege, young girls went off to try for a part on the stage, to study dress designing or modelling or ballroom dancing. Often they came to New York to seek a genuine career or only to put themselves in the path of interesting people, prosperous experiences. And even certain young men went forward to meet their fate with the hope that Mary Price would give them her undefined but miraculous help. It somehow was thought she could speed them on their way to a glowing life of unusual success and fascination, something "interesting" and lucky. A lawyer, a businessman, a doctor, a nurse, a teacher—Virginia, of course, produced these citizens in abundance, but with them Mary Price did not count, her aid was not solicited. In these pursuits the young person was most likely following in the steps of a parent, becoming the second Dr. Smith in the family, the third judge, and so on. The cries that Mary Price heard came from pioneers setting out in a trackless forest. Who has ever had an aunt in the modelling business, an uncle on television, a father in the ballet? Mary Price's being was magical and, of course, highly uncertain; she could not teach you a craft or leave you a well-equipped office in her will; her touch, her dispensations were all silver and glamour, exalting connections, sudden introductions that might change a lifetime.

But she was far away, bewildering, difficult to satisfy. Perhaps she would hate you for those little weaknesses you knew so well. Perhaps she would ignore your beautiful nose and see only the gap in your front teeth and advise you not to think for a moment of a stage career. Perhaps she would know that you envied her and, capriciously, goddess-like, simply refuse to like you at all. But in spite of your fears, there she was at the Ritz-Carlton in New York, living wonderful, rich days somehow connected with the arts, with celebrity, with worldly brilliance. Like the arts themselves, like talent and beauty, this woman's power was mysterious. And did she actually have power? How could one be sure? During a miserable young period the worst thing of all was to decide that Mary Price was a phony, for then there was no one, no name, no person from home who sat near the throne.

Heavy young girls with excellent soprano voices wondered anxiously if they could depend upon the old lady, the only person they knew in New York. Pimply-faced young men whose fathers had been beer handlers or seed salesmen, refined creatures who were mad about framed valentines of the 1890's, who fashioned home-made mobiles vaguely phallic—in their yearnings the prosaic, the severe Mary Price Kimbrough figured. She existed in a cloud of gloom and hope, scowling one day and graciously smiling the next. These young men had visions of Mary Price dining majestically on her Southern fare way up in a suite in a great New York hotel and they imagined her making possible a meeting with a famous interior decorator. All of a sudden it would be seen how useful one of the young men was, what a practical mixture of traditional, unaffected talents and original ideas. Dear Mary Price, help me, love me, for I am hungry for something grand and extraordinary after the ugliness of all that has gone so far!

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"Snobbery and gossiping, both in their most provincial form, are what the South is famous for!" Mary Price used to say throatily. She loved to disparage her region in private, that is with other Virginians, but she never disclaimed anything an outsider might in his imagination take to be hers as a Southern lady. Huge plantations, families as proud and fantastic as some Asiatic tribe, a charming hatred of Yankees—all of this she acknowledged with a shrug which said neither yes nor no. For herself, Mary Price's snobbery was puzzlingly concrete: she was passionately interested in celebrated people and to be celebrated in her mind was to be engaged, or rather to be known as a worker in one of the popular arts. If you had performed on the radio or acted in the films, Mary Price did not care if you were an ape. She was not truly sociable and so there were discipline and pain involved in her passion. She had this desire to know people not as one had a trait or a characteristic but as one may have a disease, a terrifying affliction to which one can only submit. In her rôle of friend to the busy and talented there was an element of heroism.

Mary Price Kimbrough was a rich widow. She seemed always to have been in that condition; it suited her so well that one could easily picture her waiting for it from her youth. Oddly enough, she was not to be imagined as a spinster, even though it was hard to think of her actually living with her husband. What one meant was that she was certainly a woman who would have married —she needed the three names, she was definitely *madame*, and daughterhood, if such a state may be conceived, was not her style. Mary Price was best on her own, solidly provided for, in what is called a mature situation. With the overwhelming luck of the Prices, she married young and was not long after bereaved. Her husband, Kimbrough, died of a ruptured appendix in a hotel room in Kansas City where he had gone on a business trip. It would be false to say that she saw this widowhood as "luck"; she did, however, recognise it as destiny.

Memories and memorials: how these persons we used to admire crowd in on us! As much as the next one I am fond of saying there are no eccentrics any more, of complaining that in our prosperity there are no young people to whom the simple idea of leaving home for New York is a dream worth any sacrifice. Of course this cannot be true, but yet how fearful and fabulous the city used to seem. Desire and ambition, rebellion and self-distrust, pride and vast toadying: all of these we used to feel when, picking up the telephone, we addressed Mary Price Kimbrough in a voice so faltering and unimpressive we wanted to cry for shame afterward. Created out of our hope and ignorance, she was terrible and beautiful.

THERE is a proverb saying that a rich widow weeps with one eye and laughs with the other. But Mary Price used her position more forthrightly. As soon as she became a wealthy widow, she developed her famous stare, that unabashed display of insolence, boredom, or misapprehension, whatever you decided. It was hers; it showed she had come into her own. But vanity is a tyrant and although Mary Price lived in New York she still wanted her home place to be mindful of her, to admire and to inquire. In this demand to be acknowledged on the scene of her earliest memories, Mary Price was like a banker holding a mortgage note who meant to get every penny back with interest. She meant to collect the praise she felt was due to her. As a practical and sensible woman, she understood well that fame and importance were not merely things one had, but rather were properties which required a good deal of upkeep. In the interest of her Virginia reputation, Mary Price was obliged to see the children of old acquaintances she had never liked, to admit the provincial ambassadors into her Ritz-Carlton sitting-room and serve them, Bourbon drinkers all, a glass of cheap, raw sherry. Still, it was always exciting to visit her. Settled in her splendid hotel, she partook of some of the splendour and extravagance and discomfort of New York City itself. The fine shops, the sound of a bad orchestra at tea time, the clipped, spoiled

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poodles, the large and small bars which were set around hotel lobbies for the confusion of anxious lovers who were always arriving for meetings "at the bar": in the midst of this lived one lady from Virginia, always in the thick of things, mysteriously fashionable, belonging supposedly to a world very difficult to enter. None of this glory was diminished by learning that Mary Price's celebrities were often just stepping out of or slipping back into obscurity, by discovering that she was more friendly with the dead of recent memory than with those who were still alive.

YOUNG visitors would say, "Tell me, dear, was Grace Moore really good looking or just made up by experts?"

Mary Price was not invariably complimentary to her friends in the great world. Her stony stare, her ponderous calm, her judicious reservations did not give way and in this respect at least she made no distinction between the famous and her friends back home. Her answer was, "She looked all right, I guess."

"Honey, did you honestly like Major Bowes as a person?"

"I liked him," she would say, "more or less."

After consideration she would sometimes burst forth with a general statement of preference. "I don't care if he is a Congressman. I can't abide dirty fingernails and long ones to boot." These grunty complaints gave her audience a good deal of pleasure; laughter and happiness seemed to rise up in others when Mary Price described her own depths. Her crankiness and bluntness were her humour.

Mary Price was a firmly secular person and yet everyone smiled agreeably when she said, strangely winking, that her favourite music was Nelson Eddy's recording of "The Lord's Prayer." Here again she seemed to the youthful mind to offer in her cosmopolitan, difficult spirit some of the unexpected and hidden tears of the city, the sentimental shiver of harp music. She would say of dead actors that they had "gone to do their act for the Great Producer." No doubt she was as hard as nails, but she told of herself that sometimes when she was ready for sleep, many pillows about her, her maid standing in the door with a silver thermos of water, she would hear the noise of radios, the sound of horns, conversations in the corridor, and her heart would nearly break with sadness. "What a funny feeling those city sounds give me in the middle of the night. I can hardly bear it. . . . I want to be up and about."

The vice of this lady was social activity. Independent and proud as she was, she nevertheless feared the lonely and silent evenings like a débutante. At the beginning of each week she gave frantic attention to her calendar, filling her nights with theatres, movies, dinners. On Sunday she entertained in her suite. "I hate Sunday, dread it, and always have." The quiet of a Sunday morning, the deserted streets, made her tremble with impatience. The horror of being left alone with this weekly desolation led her to go through with her dinners and cocktails on that day; only a powerful fear could have put her to work in this way because she did not like entertaining at home, taking the full responsibility. She wanted activity, preferably in a public place—the desire to please, an essential for a true hostess, was not hers. Looking at Mary Price one would never have guessed that she was consumed by her passion. Where it came from no one knew; her family was not without its drunken or licentious members, but there had been none who had dedicated a whole life to sitting, rather taciturn, homely and unbending, in public places with persons of some faint distinction. Perhaps it was the fear and longing, the ratty, eager aliveness of these poor entertainers that Mary Price responded to. Exhausted acrobats, nervously commonplace ingénues, sopranos with a tremolo: was she not one of these herself, worn out, madly serving her demon?

AT MARY PRICE'S last Sunday reception in New York she was in a sullen mood and hardly spoke except to grunt spitefully when guests voiced the intention of leaving. As I waited for the hotel elevator an

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old man who had been on the Sunday list for twenty years said to me in a malicious and nearly demented manner, "Beware of large, homely women. They have great powers, like an ugly totem, and you end up their slave!" He paused, gathering breath. "That one," he said, pointing back to Mary Price's rooms. "What a horror! Whoever looked like that before. Old witch!"

It was true that Mary Price Kimbrough did not look like other people. She was as dark as a gypsy, clumsy, and had a unique queerness of appearance which amazed you no matter how long you might have known her. The sight of her startled people and they stared at her with interest in Rumplemayer's, in the Ritz bar, in the fifth row of the orchestra stalls. Her large, neat, black-shingled head commanded every eye; something overwhelming, forceful, and primitive in the thick neck reminded you of the melancholy fascination of extinct animals. She *wore* her clothes in the fullest sense of the word; her broadtail coat and Lily Daché beret of some seasons back performed and endured, giving a memorable regularity to her image. All of her physical being was marked by a bulkiness, an exaggeration of length here and breadth there, an outrageousness. Her large, full nose was fit for a king, even if it could be traced to her father, Alfred Dean Price. In a tailored suit the profile of her immense bosom was a simple astonishment. Weight, astonishment, oddity—all of it she bore in her indolent, cocksure Mary Price Kimbrough manner. She had never heard of the notion that theory and practice should be the same, and slow-moving, lazy, inward as her nature was she nevertheless had many brisk little sayings by which she urged others to action and energy. If one complained that a white suit in New York City was impracticable she would turn on you, saying in a tone of correction, "Everything requires work and care. Even the streets must be cleaned." Shifting in her chair to take a mint from the dish beside her, she would say that she knew for a definite fact that art was "ninety per cent perspiration, ten per cent inspiration," and that everyone ought to "roll up his sleeves and go to work."

When she died there was a notice in *The New York Times* which identified her as a long resident of the Ritz-Carlton. She died in the thick of things, preparing to go to a performance of *Guys and Dolls*, in which an acquaintance had a part. She was greatly mourned by young Virginians who had hoped to know her one day, youths who had not left home but carried in their hearts a great yearning for New York and a determination to conquer it. Mary Price's place would not be filled by anyone else. It was not easy to imagine that a young, rich widow would spend everything on the city and Mary Price had given everything indeed. The rumour was that she died just in time, having long ago started to spend her principal in order to keep up at the Ritz. Inflation and the move to the St. Regis treated her dwindling fortune without consideration.

In death she was as impressive as ever. She was buried in a fine, rich-widow's coffin; her embalmed face was clear and smooth and still faintly threatening, staring. Her mortician, the man who had once sought her help when he wished to become a window decorator, had seen many a funeral, but he was reported to have wept several times during Mary Price's arrangements. Many people saw him bend, without shame, to kiss the pink and brown cold brow.

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TEN POEMS

Cassandra

CASSANDRA, cold among your hooded birds,
your antique eagles and your braziers,
spell out the old and enigmatic words,
the tiny, muffled death, the dawn of tears.

Sybil, sardonic among the doomed lovers,
see their roses as ashes, their azures, dust.
Though they arrive in amity and trust,
fathers will be dethroned, blood crown the brothers.

The floods, the fires, chaos and insurrection
are certain cards; an eternal worm
chews in the warm dark. Perpetual defection
flaws the diamond and unflowers the form.

No oasis is eternal, its dim green springs
will run to sand. And the leaves foretell
today's rampant prince and all his underlings
will be torn to ribbons and will sing in hell.

But certain fortunes are perhaps unexpected.
A papal vanity in Rome, an odd ambition
for two eternities will have a fond fruition.
Bernini's fountains were not predicted.

Nor was it known a hennaed virgin queen
would lean down to listen to such poetry
the echo was perpetual. Nor was it to be seen
Avon would incarnadine our history.

Bent over the smothered ruby of the ash,
Cassandra, was there formed a frowning face
that would unlock the sun, and with a flash
of strident silver, obliterate all space?

Among these tombs and trumpets, was there room
for the blossoming music or the opened stone?
the immense, millioned midnight, the great dome
with its tumult of angels in polychrome?

Whatever is of time and blood and breath
surrenders to your prophecy its wreath.
But music moves the wind beyond all death,
and poetry the plumes above all grief.

Robert Horan

History

IT IS Leviathan, mountain and world,
Yet in its grandeur we perceive
This flutter of impalpables arriving
Like moths and heartbreaks, flakes of snow
Falling on wool, or clouds of thought
Trailing rain in the mind: some old one's dream
Of hauling canvas, or the joy of swording
Hard rascals with a smack—for lordly blood
Circulates tenderly and will seep away;
And the winds blowing across the day
From quarters numberless, going where words go
And songs go, even the holy songs, or where
Leaves, showering, go with the spindling grasses.
Into this mountain shade everything passes.
The slave lays down his bones here and the hero,
Thrown, goes reeling with blinded face;
The long desired opens her scorched armpits.
A mountain; so a gloom and air of ghosts,
But charged with utter light if this is light,
A feathery mass, where this beholding
Shines among lustrous fiddles and codices,
Or dusky angels painted against gold
With lutes across their knees. Magical grain
Bound up in splay sheaves on an evening field,
And a bawling calf butchered—these feed
The curious coil of man. A man, this man,
Bred among lakes and railway cars and smoke,
The salt of childhood on his wintry lips,
His full heart ebbing toward the new tide
Arriving, arriving, in laughter and cries,
Down the chaotic dawn and eastern drift,
Would hail the unforeseen, and celebrate
On the great mountainside those sprites,
Tongues of delight, that may remember him—
The yet unborn, trembling in the same rooms,
Breakfasting before the same grey windows,
Lying, grieving again; yet all beyond him,
Who knew he lived in rough Jehovah's breath,
And burned, a quiet wick in a wild night,
Loving what he beheld and will behold.

Robert Fitzgerald

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On the Move

"Man, you gotta Go."

The blue jay scuffling in the bushes follows
Some hidden purpose, and the gust of birds
That spurts across the field, the wheeling swallows,
Have nested in the trees and undergrowth.
Seeking their instinct, or their poise, or both,
One moves with an uncertain violence
Under the dust thrown by a baffled sense
Or the dull thunder of approximate words.

On motorcycles, up the road, they come:
Small, black, as flies hanging in heat, the Boys,
Until the distance throws them forth, their hum
Bulges to thunder held by calf and thigh.
In goggles, donned impersonality,
In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust,
They strap in doubt—by hiding it, robust—
And almost hear a meaning in their noise.

Exact conclusion of their hardiness
Has no shape yet, but from known whereabouts
They ride, direction where the tires press.
They scare a flight of birds across a field:
Much that is natural, to the will must yield.
Men manufacture both machine and soul,
And use what they imperfectly control
To dare a future from the taken routes.

It is a part solution, after all.
One is not necessarily discord
On earth; or damned because, half animal,
One lacks direct instinct, because one wakes
Afloat on movement that divides and breaks.
One joins the movement in a valueless world,
Choosing it, till, both hurler and the hurled,
One moves as well, always toward, toward.

A minute holds them, who have come to go:
The self-defined, astride the created will
They burst away; the towns they travel through
Are home for neither bird nor holiness,
For birds and saints complete their purposes.
At worst, one is in motion; and at best,
Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,
One is always nearer by not keeping still.

Thom Gunn

The Dying Man

I

His Words

"Man has created death"
—W. B. Yeats

I heard a dying man
Say to his gathered kin,
"My soul's hung out to dry,
Like a fresh-salted skin;
I doubt I'll use it again.

"What's done is yet to come;
The flesh deserts the bone,
But a kiss widens the rose;
I know, as the dying know,
Eternity is Now.

"A man sees, as he dies,
Death's possibilities;
My heart sways with the world,
I am that final thing,
A man learning to sing."

II

What Now?

1

Caught in the dying light,
I thought myself reborn.
My hands turn into hooves.
I wear the leaden weight
Of what I did not do.

2

Places great with their dead,
The mire, the sodden wood,
Remind me to stay alive.
I am the clumsy man
The instant ages on.

3

I burned the flesh away,
In love, in lively May.
I turn my look upon
Another shape than hers
Now, as the casement blurs.

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4

In the worst night of my will,
I dared to question all,
And would the same again.
What's beating at the gate?
Who's come can wait.

III

The Wall

What apparition from the conscious mind
Moans at the sill? What longs to be reborn?
The figure at my back is not my friend;
The hand upon my shoulder turns to horn.
I found my father when I did my work,
Only to lose myself in this small dark.

Though it reject dry borders of the seen,
What sensual eye can keep an image pure,
Leaning across a sill to greet the dawn?
A slow growth is a hard thing to endure.
When figures out of obscure shadow rave.
All sensual love's but dancing on a grave.

The wall has entered: I must love the wall,
A madman staring at perpetual night.
A spirit raging at the visible.
I breathe alone until my dark is bright.
Dawn's where the white is. Who would
know the dawn
When there's a dazzling dark behind the
sun?

Theodore Roethke

The Exacting Ghost

I SPEAK of an exacting ghost,
And if the world distrust my theme
I answer: This that moved me most
Was first a vision, then a dream.

By the new year you set great store.
The leaves have turned, and some are shed,
A sacred, moving metaphor
Is living in my mind, though dead.

I would have counted good years more,
But all is changed: your life has set.
I praise that living metaphor
And when I sleep I see it yet.

Why is it, though the conscious mind
Toils, the identity to keep
Forgetful ages leave behind,
No likeness matches that of sleep?

Last night, when sleep gave back the power
To see what nature had withdrawn,
I saw, corrected by that hour,
All likenesses the mind had drawn.

In crowded tavern you I found
Conversing there, yet knew you dead.
This was no ghost. When you turned round,
It was indeed your living head.

Time had returned, and pregnant wit
Lodged in your eyes. What health was this?
Never had context been so fit
To give old words new emphasis.

If hope was then restrained by doubt
Or joy by fear, I cannot tell.
All the disturbances of thought
Hung on my words; yet all seemed well.

You smiled. Your reassurance gave
My doubt its death, my hope its due.
I had always known beyond the grave,
I said, all would be well with you.

You fixed contracted, narrowing eyes
To challenge my instinctive sense.
The uncertainty of my surmise
Their penetration made intense.

"What right had you to know, what right
To arrogate so great a gift?"
I woke, and memory with the light
Brought back a weight I could not lift.

In sleep the dead and living year
Had stood one moment reconciled,
But in the next the accuser's spear
Had sacked the city of the child.

Why is it, though the conscious mind
Toils, the identity to keep
Forgetful years will leave behind,
No likeness matches that of sleep?

Vernon Watkins

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Mariners' Carol

So still the night swinging,
Wind of our faring,
Only the bows' seethe to lap us,
Stays and wake whispering,
The thin bell striking,
And our hearts in their blindness.
O star, shine before us!

The serpent's deep sliding,
Wind of our faring,
Is everywhere around us,
Heaves under us, gliding;
We know its toothed curling
The whole world encircles.
O star, shine before us!

Crushed in its drag and keeping,
Wind of our faring,
The darkened dead have no peace,
World-without-end shifting;
All, all are there, and no resting.
It exults above their faces.
O star, shine before us!

The horizon's perfect ring,
Wind of our faring,
None enters nor ever has.
And we, like a cradle, rocking:
For the first glimpse of our homing
We roll and are restless.
O star, shine before us!

Till, heaven and earth joining,
Wind of our faring,
It is born to us
Like the first line of dawn breaking;
For that word and sight yearning
We keep the long watches.
O star, shine before us!

W. S. Merwin

Images

I

Take one look at that face and go your way.
Regard these lines of motionless desire
Perpetually assuaged yet unappeased,
Still yearning for what still is about to be.
What you see there is something else than beauty.
These are your lineaments, the face of life
When it is quite alone, and you forgotten.
Look once. But do not hope to find a sentence
To tell what you have seen. Stop at the colon:
And set a silence after to speak the word
That you will always seek and never find,
Perhaps, if found, the good and beautiful end.
You will not reach that place. So leave the hiatus
There in the broken sentence. What is missing
You will always think of. And do not turn again
To scan that face lest you should leave upon it
Your personal load of trouble and desire.
You cannot add to it nor take away.
All that you think or say will be a postscript
To that imperfect mystery, limping sentence.
And do not forget. But look once at that face.

II

You in imaginary fears
Threading the terrors of a wood
That has no place but in your mind;
You hunted by the ravenous years
That send their warnings through your blood
Where fears long conquered still affright;
You willingly gone to be with blind
Tiresias in his buried night
That opens at an idle word—
You look in wonder at the bird,
Round ball of appetite and fear,
That sings at ease upon the branch,
Time a long silence in its ear
That never heard of time or space;
You who hear the avalanche
Must fabricate a temporal tale
To bring the timeless nightingale
And swallow to your trysting place.

III

He is the little, sly, absconding god,
Hides in the moment. Look, and he is gone,
But turn away, and there he is back again.
He is more quick than movement,
Present and gone, absent and safe in hiding,
No spell can bind him. But idle fools and children
Take him for granted, are at their ease with him,
And he's the true friend of the absentminded.
He is too agile for time's dull iambics,
Lightly dives in and out of stale duration,
Poised on the endless present. There he is free,
Having no past or future. All things know him.
And then are eased as by a heavenly chance.
The greater gods sometimes in grave amusement
Smile at his tricks, yet nod in approbation.

Edwin Muir

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A Postcard from Venice

THOSE golden riderless horses yaw
As over the green floor of a bay
Easy at hawsers, while the air
Rides that unbeaten piazza;
Venice descending to our day
Suspends European glory here.

Lagooned, eternal as an hour,
We saw that lily where she lay
Afloat unfolding to the sea
Her fading summaries of power
At nightfall, and, hovering there
Like dusk, the unhinged energies.

Archangels beating up a wave
San Marco crumbles into stone
Fierce desolation brooding on
The lovely city, dove by dove
With declarations of the power
That drew a Venus from the foam.

David Wright

18IIIXSG

This is for afterwards.
I'VE heard it calling halfway what I mean
By my own name. I've heard it out and made
My answer alter all the words between
Us as we spoke them up through the unsaid.
What was all mine, all none of us, is ours.
I move away from what I must endure
Afterwards. Its meaning green and upward stares:
But blank across the meaning plods a boor.
This is the end of me. It's always been
This way from what I am. I'm renegade
To what I am. Between us language roars
Its floods to drown me in. My death is sure:
Though safe to watch me going down west and
Beside ourselves with horror on dry land.

All that then afterwards.
Meanwhile my mouth goes on to promising
That this gay night is half the night it was
When, without voice, half of the moon could sing
Through Marazion to each one of us.
I've half undone it, hearing what I make
Almost it say to me. I'm there again:
And, being there, the words forget to take
Immediately to the wound that feels the pain.
And yet it hurts: you know it hurts, but fling
That speaking through us each aside for laws
Where everything is measured up to fake,
And tiny thunders or some coloured rain
Grow big enough to drown. A full moon sways
Above the piece of us that each betrays.

Hear then now afterwards.
I'll talk against the way I'm talking to
This devil at my elbow with his pins
Through my parsed mind. He makes it try to do
Impossibly through spreadeagled synonyms,
For things that almost happened but could not.
It's half my way with you to be half lost.
It's all of it I pack in the least thought.
And when I've done we do not know the most.
We're all behind before we've started through
The syllables, but the syllable as it spins
Loud out long after us, it's not not not
Nothing nor next to it, nor best, nor worst,
But always halfway what we say to each
Till, having spoken, we discover speech.

Burns Singer

Letter from Lerwick

SET to a breath now, Sydney, and back from the real wind
I sit upturned on a stone. The sinking islands still
Breathe out on a mist. My words awaken to pull under
Your pitiable halfway man, and I rise to all
The lures of a loud world and find myself like ruined
Sanctuaries renewed, raised safe up out of the whole
North East by the drowning ocean. Already and
At every breath again I set about my fall.

I set my breath against the belabouring mist, and in
Its galaxies I'll find you where my cold image is
Annulled by its discovery, dead in the upturned soil.
Over again and at a breath hardly indrawn
From any of us all, I reach my images.
The sea swells solid. Hushed in its mists my dead men call.

Burns Singer

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NOTES FROM A DIARY

Post-War Germanies

After the First World War, Germany was spiritually and economically wasted, but not physically a ruin. The result: a desire to invent new forms.

After this war, the cities lay in ruins. The result: desire for restoration, much as when someone loses all his teeth he would like a false set the replica of those he lost. Hamburg, for instance, I saw in 1929, then a ruin in 1945, and now in 1955 as like what it was in 1929 as the jack of a jack-in-the-box.

Western Germany today is the glittering promenade: the Kurfürstendamm shining with show windows past which people walk up and down all day and most of the night, looking from one another to brand-new goods displayed, and thinking: "We have got all this back, better and brighter than before." Kiel has two great, lit promenades, with all traffic shut out, laid down like tracks of Success driving through the middle of the town.

These two Germanies of the 20's and 50's are laboratory demonstrations of the effects of history. In 1920, the desire for imaginative, individual self-expression to fill the void: today, simply for filling the gap of loss.

In East Berlin one sees another demonstration: the Soviet Embassy and the Stalinallee. The Soviet Embassy is of that phase of recent Russian history which so strangely recalls Queen Victoria. Put it down in Exhibition Road, it would pass unnoticed among the museums, the colleges, and the technical institutes.

The Stalinallee, without being "modern architecture," is formidably of this time. Built on either side of an avenue so wide that it depresses like a parade ground, the two masses of tenements, offices, shops, deploying at curves, halting at cross roads, and then continuing in exactly the same formation beyond them, suggest an army—each block a company or division under the eyes of a frowning commander. These windows are not even cells of a hive: they are squares on the sheet of an immense graph in which a human dweller would vainly seek not merely his name but even his number.

Modern Architecture Thirty Years After

After thirty years of modern building, two paradoxical features of functional architecture are surely evident. One: that the bare economic style is only overwhelmingly effective when it looks extremely new and extremely expensive—only a millionaire or a community can afford to build a functional building. The other, is that modern architecture, invented by nordics in nordic climates, looks best in the southern hemisphere. It is buildings like the immense Ministry of Education at Rio de Janeiro (a cloud of glass and concrete upraised on columns above the street) that astonish with their fantastic evocation of new forms and opaque colours on flat surfaces. But these need hard sharp shadows, hard fields of light. They are like magnificent dry tropical cacti. A grey sky, or stains of damp or discoloration, and they look spongeous and squalid.

Conversations with George Kennan

George Kennan, former American Ambassador to Russia, was at the Milan Conference of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. After the Congress, I met him again, in London at a luncheon given by ENCOUNTER, and in Berlin, with Melvin Lasky.

Kennan makes very opposite impressions. Clean-shaven, with a high, domed forehead, and with shining, rather narrow eyes, he seems an idealist Bostonian who has at some time perhaps been a Confucian. He is a missionary who hates missions, but who, when he speaks against them, has an expression that lights up with missionary zeal.

At the ENCOUNTER luncheon, he was asked to give his impressions of the Milan Conference. After a few politenesses, he said that the speeches made by some of the delegates from Asia had almost persuaded him there was little point in Americans attending conferences with Asians. These speeches made it clear that whatever Americans did they were always thought to be acting from power-lusting, money-grabbing or war-mongering motives. In his luminous, enthusiastic way Kennan went on to say that his objection applied not only to the Milan Conference meeting with Asian delegates, but to American apologias everywhere—in Asia, in South America, in parts of Europe even. He did not mean—he said —that material aid should be abandoned, but that Americans should assert bluntly that they only helped people because they wanted their 12 per cent profit. They should never attempt to put America in a favourable light, however disinterested they might really feel or be. The work of explaining America to people was in many places absolutely useless. There the American Information Centres did no good, perhaps even they did harm.

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Seeming partly ironic, partly self-mocking, and yet relentlessly serious Mr. Kennan said that if Asians and other foreigners wanted to understand America, why then, they should be told the country was wide open, and invited in to see for themselves. At the same time they should be warned that probably they would not like what they saw; and probably would understand little of it. He thought that just as there were situations in which it was no use two people going on being married, so this relation of America to some of the so-called "undeveloped areas" should lead to divorce. In these parts of the world, the British could probably explain things better than the Americans.

In Berlin, at Melvin Lasky's, I mentioned that reporting the Fuchs case, I had been very near Fuchs in court and heard him say words to the effect that he could never be punished sufficiently for his worst crime, which was the betrayal of his friends. Someone suggested that Fuchs had not really given away anything, because all the secrets he had handed over had been filed with the Soviet police and had never reached the Soviet scientists. Kennan said: "Usually the worst thing is not the secrets which have been given away but indirect results which the offender himself may have no suspicion of. For instance, Hiss handed over documents of only secondary importance; but the real evil of the Hiss case was the indirect harm it did to everyone whom Hiss knew—the discredit it brought on Dean Acheson, the encouragement it gave to McCarthyism. Fuchs was right that his real offence was betraying his friends. As far as I can see, the only absolute virtue is loyalty."

On Caring and not Caring

Reading the chapters about Austria and the Spanish Civil War in John Lehmann's autobiography, the thought—which has long been with me—recurred: "We did not care enough."

The 1930's were a confused, perplexed period when choices were forced upon us, and yet they seemed compromised. For the unpolitical who supported politically the largely unpolitical victims of Fascism, it was difficult to judge actions which involved us in methods of power politics.

Yet through the confusion ran a thread of undiluted suffering; the action of bad men upon their fellow beings victimised not for anything they had done but for what they were—Jews, or intellectuals.

Under the complexity there was something quite simple. We all felt this at the time. Not the complexity, but the essential simplicity produced that fusion of political and imaginative passion.

Caring for the victims enabled one to see clearly to the real cause—that suffering—and to look beyond the slogans, the propaganda, the politics of all the Causes. Caring meant judging politics by humanity, and it also meant—in the case of non-political artists who felt called upon to support anti-fascist politics—being able to measure what one could imagine by the extent to which one could care.

Caring about what was happening to victims and refusing to get lost in politics could provide answers to questions of individual conscience. How far had the anti-fascists adopted—in the name of exigence—the methods of their opponents? Must the poets distort their truth to the simplifications of the politicians?

Two phrases prove how these questions preoccupied us at that time. (1) *All power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.* (2) *Le Trahison des clercs.* The intellectuals supported anti-fascism against "clercs" who had betrayed intellectual freedom; yet in their hearts few were certain that they had not also become "clercs" who betrayed.

To care was to test every situation by one's knowledge of the pure evil of tyranny; and thus to be aware of the danger of introducing this evil on one's own side. The episode of the POUM in Spain was a singular test.

And one aspect of "*Le trahison des clercs*" was that for a poet, "*trahison*" was simply to write outside and beyond what he knew to be his true subject.

But we did not care enough.

Examples of those I suppose really to have cared—In action, George Orwell, Christopher Cauldwell. In literature, Auden, Gide.

Remembering the Thirties

When we put pen
To paper, in those times,
We knew our written
Ten lines and five rhymes
Before you could turn
The page over, well might burn.

With such doubts, how could we doubt
Our duty to write
Poems that put fires out
To keep lights alight?
"Putting first things first"
Often we wrote our worst.

Perhaps our best was when, feeling despair,
Our rhymes like lovers wandered hapless where
Our whole world seemed one fire. Fire, after all,
does breathe on air.

Stephen Spender

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Art

Sidney Nolan and the Kelly Myth

NED KELLY is the private pride, and public shame, of the Australians. In forty books, six films, and countless tales and ballads, the bushranger hero has been accorded local immortality—as befits the only figure of myth the continent has yet produced. But the myth is a secret one, privately cherished, guarded suspiciously. Australians, insensitive above all others to anyone else's feelings, are touchy as Pawnee chiefs when themselves exposed to outside comment—sympathetic or otherwise, it makes no odds. Let not the small breeds of the lesser continents—the "Pommie" above all—inquire too closely into the origins of the Kelly legend! Nor should any native son presume, without danger, to display his vision of Ned's story for the delight of the outer world—however deep his understanding of the myth may be, however revealing of the wilder beauties of Australia.

There are, in the Australian (as in most peoples), a demon and an angel. The angel is brave—fantastically so—open-handed and shrewd, humorous, adventurous, and, most blessed of all, contemptuous of fuss. The demon is cruel — again, fantastically — censorious and incurious, flinty-hearted, and vain as Lucifer at being all these things. Ned Kelly was a first generation Australian: yet, even in those early days (he lived from 1855 to 1880), he seems already a man of the typical Aussie blend: a noble tough, a violent champion, whose example, as the most famous of all Australians, has probably helped to mould the national character.

The ambivalence of attitude to Ned among modern Australians may seem due—at first sight—to a natural embarrassment at having a convict as an elder-brother-figure. On a deeper level of the collective consciousness, there may be the sense of guilt at having hanged a hero. Or, deeper still, perhaps, a guiltier joy at having done so. At all events, even today, a stranger who visits what is still called the "Kelly Country" round Glenrowan, should not, uninvited, chat to strangers about Ned.

Accordingly, when Sidney Nolan showed his remarkable Kelly pictures in Melbourne, in 1948, they were greeted on many sides with crafty silence and, in general, with considerable reserve. Nor have the echoes of their successful display in Paris and in London, or of the exhibition of the new, even finer, series of Kelly pictures in 1955, been heard with any great rapture in the distant continent. The temptation, therefore, is very strong to poke one's nose, from a safe distance, into the Australians' business, and tell them that Kelly was—whether hanged or not—an extraordinary man when judged by any standards, and that they can shout this out proudly from the shacktops; and tell them, too, that Nolan's interpretation of the Kelly myth is true to the nature of the outlaw's life and spirit, as well as pictorially outstanding.

FIRST of all, then, I set out the facts of Kelly's life—with no effort at objectivity, since the Kelly story is bound to engage one's sympathies violently one way or the other.

His father, John ("Red") Kelly, was transported from Tipperary to Van Diemen's Land for seven years for stealing two pigs. After he'd served five of them, he crossed to Victoria as a ticket-of-leave man, worked as a carpenter, and married Nelly Quinn, the daughter of free Irish immigrants (not

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"criminals" like himself). The couple moved from one smallholding to another near townships along the road from Melbourne to the New South Wales border, and of the children born to them in these places, Ned (the eldest), Dan, Jim, and Maggie are the most important to the story.

A year before Ned's birth, there had taken place, in 1854, the first pitched battle to be fought on Victorian soil—the episode of the Eureka Stockade. (The second—and last—was to be the Siege of Glenrowan of 1880, at which the Kelly Gang was finally destroyed.) The Eureka struggle was fundamentally political in its motives—a republican protest by the dispossessed (gold-diggers, small "cockey" farmers, manual workers) against the power of the "squattocracy" (big landowners), and against alien English rule; and despite its immediate failure, it succeeded ultimately, since political equality, and then self-government, were finally "granted." (The "Flag of Stars" of the Eureka rebels was then embodied in the national flag.)

Ned thus grew up in an atmosphere of the wildest social ferment, in which the poor Irish Quinns and Kellys were naturally ranged, by interest and by temperament, against the powers-that-be. These powers were represented, in the Kelly Country, by the magistrates and police. No doubt the magistrates were just according to their lights; and in the police force, as well as devious, provocative poltroons, there were certainly men—particularly Irishmen—of outstanding courage. There is no doubt, also, that the Quinn and Kelly clans were "trouble-makers" and, on a small scale at first, law-breakers too. And yet, when one reads the accounts of the trials in which, sooner or later, Ned and almost all his Quinn and Kelly relations (including his mother, father, and brothers) became involved, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the justice was class "justice," and the cat-and-mouse police methods, though unsophisticated by modern standards, as bad as any in the world today. Small wonder that Ned, in his extraordinary "Jerilderie Letter" (of which much more hereafter), described the police in terms which may still seem to ring unpleasantly true:

> A policeman is a disgrace to his country, not alone to the mother that suckled him. In the first place, he is a rogue at heart, but too cowardly to follow it up, without having the force of mind to disguise it.

THE first serious charge against Ned, brought when he was fifteen (there had been various minor encounters with "the law" before), was of aiding and abetting Harry Power, the bushranger. The charge (though most probably just—this has never been proved) was dismissed for lack of evidence; and young Kelly's demeanour in court gave the greatest displeasure to the editor of the *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, who reported: "Kelly seemed quite indifferent to the danger of his position. While casting eyes amongst the crowd, he smiled complacently and assumed a jaunty air. Previous to his appearance in court, and while confined in the lockup, he sang like a bird, and appeared proud of his position." His first convictions to hard labour were for assault and—in the same court on the same day—for "indecent behaviour." (It was alleged that he had sent to his victim's wife a parcel containing what a witness described as "certain portions of a bullock's carcass.") Three weeks after his release he was arrested again on a charge of horse-stealing. When the police discovered that he had been in jail at the time of the robbery, the charge was altered to one of receiving. The thief and receiver were both convicted—the thief to eighteen months' imprisonment and Ned Kelly to three years' hard labour at Pentridge prison in Melbourne.

He served for two and a half years (with a surprising remission of six months for "good conduct"). When he was released, in 1874, at the age of nineteen (with six years left to him to live), he was a criminal, but not yet a bushranger. In the altered conditions of the colony—with railways and telegraph lines expanding far into the bush—it was generally believed that robbery under arms would now be almost impossible; and Harry Power—Ned's earlier mentor—was already being called "the last of the bushrangers." But then came the Fitzpatrick affair: which presented Ned Kelly with the alternatives of spending the rest of his life in prison on what he declared to be a trumped-up charge, or of taking, as he did, to the bush, and gathering the Kelly Gang together.

During the four years since his release from

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Pentridge, Kelly had been successfully engaged, by his own later admission, in extensive and methodical horse and cattle stealing, without being detected or, at any rate, caught. In April 1878, a Constable Fitzpatrick (for punching whose jaw Ned had earlier been fined £2) visited the house of Kelly's mother at Greta with a warrant for the arrest of his brother Dan. In a scuffle with Dan and his friends, the constable was wounded in the wrist—according to Fitzpatrick, by a bullet; according to Dan, by a door-catch. A charge of attempted murder was brought against the Kellys' mother and two of the men (all of whom were arrested), against Dan (whom they couldn't find), and against Ned—who, it seems certain, was away in New South Wales at the time of the incident. It does, indeed, seem likely that if he had been in Greta, and if he had shot at Fitzpatrick, he would have done the job rather better. Or, in his own words:

> But they knew well I was not there, or I would have scattered their blood and brains like rain and manured the Eleven Mile Creek with their bloated carcasses—and yet remember there is not one drop of murderous blood in my veins!

After various remands in custody without trial, lasting for more than six months, the prisoners were finally brought before Judge Sir Redmond Barry. Ned and Dan, meanwhile, though still safe in hiding, had sent a message to the police magistrate offering to surrender if the charge against their mother were withdrawn; this offer was not accepted. Sir Redmond sentenced Ellen Kelly to three years' imprisonment; and somewhat injudiciously told the mother, "If your son Ned were here, I would make an example of him! I would give him a sentence of fifteen years!" (It was Sir Redmond who had tried eleven of the rebel diggers after the incident of the Eureka Stockade; they were all found not guilty by a Melbourne jury. Two years after the Fitzpatrick trial, he and Ned Kelly were to meet at the Central Criminal Court of the same city.) When he heard of the sentence passed on his mother, Ned Kelly wrote:

> It will pay the Government to give justice and liberty to those people who are suffering innocently.
>
> If not, I will be compelled to show some colonial stratagem which will open the eyes of not only the police and inhabitants of Victoria, but also the whole British Army.

THE Kelly Gang was born, and the Kelly Hunt (sometimes called the "Kelly War") was on. Apart from the considerable number of sympathisers who helped them (or professed to do so, since no legend would be complete without its secret traitors), the gang itself were four in number: Ned and Dan Kelly (aged twenty-three and seventeen), Steve Hart (eighteen), and Joe Byrne (twenty-one). The gang had as assets better horses (since they could steal them), better information services (since they didn't have to pay for them), a better knowledge of the country, and, in Ned himself, a highly intelligent strategist and an intrepid leader. The hunters had everything else.

In the first encounter, called the Battle of Stringybark Creek, three policemen were shot dead. Here is Ned Kelly's account of the battle—tendentious, of course:

> This cannot be called wilful murder, for I was compelled to shoot them, or lie down and let them shoot me.
>
> It would not have been wilful murder if they had packed our remains in, shattered into a mass of gore, to Mansfield. They would have got great praise, as well as promotion.
>
> But I am reckoned a horrid brute, because I was not cowardly enough to lie down for them under such insults to my people.
>
> Certainly their wives and children are to be pitied, but those men came into the bush with the intention of scattering pieces of me and my brother all over the bush; yet they know and acknowledge that I have been wronged, and my mother and four or five men lagged innocent.
>
> And is my mother, and my brothers and sisters, not to be pitied also?

Six days after the Battle of Stringybark Creek, the Victorian parliament passed the Felons' Apprehension Act, by which the gang could be declared outlaws. As an outlaw could be shot on sight, legally, by anyone, the gang grew even bolder and more desperate. They decided to rob a bank at Euroa in broad daylight. While he was planning this operation, Ned wrote a letter to Donald Cameron, an M.P. who had opposed the passing of the Felons' Apprehension Act. "I have no intention," he said, "of asking mercy for myself or any mortal man, or apologising, but I wish to give warning that if my people do not get justice, and if those innocents are not released from prison, I shall be forced to seek revenge of everything of the human race in future." The letter was signed

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with "a sweet goodbye from Edward Kelly, a forced outlaw."

The robbery at Euroa was very peculiar and entirely successful. The four outlaws took £2,000 odd in cash and gold and, before departing, they entertained more than thirty men and women they had taken prisoner to an evening picnic, and to a vivacious display of horsemanship. Always menacing, and never bluffing ("an outlaw's orders must be obeyed"), the Kellys appear to have been affable and even courteous as well. It is difficult, one must admit, to believe the numerous reports of this Robin Hood behaviour of theirs—and yet, it is at all events worth recording that in this, and in subsequent robberies, no thefts were ever made from individuals on the highway, or from homesteads. The targets were the police stations and the banks.

As immediate consequences of the Euroa raid, the government offered rewards of £1,000 for the capture ("dead or alive," of course) of each of the gangsters; fifty soldiers —nearly half of the regular force in the colony—were sent to guard the rural banks; and a police force of two hundred men was deployed, with extra pay of six shillings a day, for men on "Kelly duty." Mass arrests of twenty supposed sympathisers were made on vague charges of aiding and abetting the outlaws. During their trial at Beechworth (at which most of the prisoners were, as usual, remanded in custody) the local press reported that "a very unhealthy sympathy with the Kellys prevails throughout the district."

THE reader will no doubt have noticed the unusual quality of the remarks that have hitherto been quoted as Ned Kelly's own. Most of these come from the "Jerilderie Letter": a document of sixteen pages which Kelly, with forty soldiers and two hundred policemen (not to mention enthusiastic amateur hunters) on his track, all entitled to shoot him on sight and collect £1,000, sat down to write, in hiding in the bush, as a sort of "*Apologia pro Vita sua.*" Addressed to a publisher he had not yet found (it was to be, he hoped, a printer in the town of the next raid, Jerilderie), it opens with the words, "Dear Sir: I wish to acquaint you with some of the occurrences of the present, past, and future." After describing his early life and his encounters with the law, the letter soon takes on the tones of social criticism:

> It will always pay a rich man to be liberal with the poor, and make as few enemies as he can. If the poor are on his side, he shall lose nothing by it.
>
> If the rich depend on the police they shall be driven to destruction, as the police cannot, and will not, protect them.
>
> If duffing and bushranging were abolished, the police would have to cadge for their living.
>
> I speak from experience, as I have sold horses and cattle innumerable, and I never was interfered with while I kept up this successful trade.

The Irish patriot next turns upon the English:

> What would England do, if America declared war on her and hoisted the green flag? It is all Irishmen who have command of England's armies, forts and batteries. Even her very Life Guards and Beef Eaters are Irish!
>
> Would they not slew around, and fight her with her own arms, for the sake of the colour they have not dared to wear for years, to reinstate it, and raise old Erin's isle once more from the pressure and tyranny of the English yoke, which has kept it in poverty and starvation, and caused them to wear the enemy's coat?
>
> What else can England expect?

There is a final threat to those who may take it on themselves to help the police:

> If I had robbed and plundered, ravished and murdered everyone I met, young and old, rich and poor, the public could not do any more than take firearms to assist the police, as they have done. . . .
>
> . . . I have never interfered with any person unless he deserved it, and yet there are civilians who take firearms against me, for what reason I do not know, unless they want me to turn on them, and exterminate them without medicine. . . .
>
> . . . By the Light that Shines, the pleasure of being pegged on an ant-bed, with their bellies opened, their fat taken out and rendered and poured down their throats boiling hot will be cool to what I will give some of them.

THE Jerilderie raid began with the kidnapping of the police, in whose uniforms the gang reconnoitred the town—thereby successfully reversing the police technique of hunting them in plain clothes. Next, after cutting the telegraph wires, they invaded the Royal Hotel, locked all the customers in the

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dining-room, went next door to the Bank of New South Wales and captured the manager (he was in his bath), stole £1,450, and destroyed all the title deeds and mortgages they could find. Ned went in search of the local printer, failed to find him, and gave his manifesto to a bank teller who promised to see that it would be published. (Needless to say, he later handed it to the authorities, who published the damning passages only). Before his departure, the outlaw stood his prisoners drinks at the publican's expense, and harangued them for half an hour on the theme of his life story. Jerilderie is over the border, and the government of New South Wales now doubled the rewards offered by the Victorians.

For the next year and a half the gang were at large, but inactive. It was during this time that they manufactured the strange armour that was to be their special protection and, in the end, their undoing. Two round metal shields, laced together and supported by straps, protected the back, chest, and stomach; and to these was riveted an apron covering the thighs. Only Ned Kelly wore a helmet—a cylinder, falling over the nape of the neck behind and, in the front, two hinged pieces with a slit between them for the eyes. The total weight was nearly 100 lbs. These metal suits—still the visual symbol of the Kelly Gang—they tested by firing bullets at one another from ranges decreasing to within ten feet.

The police force, meanwhile, were perfecting their secret weapons too. They brought down from Queensland a party of aboriginal black trackers ("Black Devils," according to Kelly), and developed their intelligence service. The most dangerous of their informers was Aaron Sherritt, to whom Joe Byrne's sister had once been engaged. The gang decided on the assassination of Sherritt, and on the extermination of the black trackers by no less a means than derailing a police special train.

This was the plan. No passenger trains ran on Sundays: a train coming up the line that day could therefore be only a special. The Kellys calculated that if Sherritt were assassinated late on Saturday night, at his home in Beechworth, the alarm would be raised and a special train sent up the line from the police post at Benalla. A curve on a high embankment beyond Glenrowan, a township between these two places, was chosen for the derailment.

On Saturday evening, June 26th, 1880, Joe Byrne and Dan Kelly called at Aaron Sherritt's house, where four policemen were living to protect him. Byrne shot him dead, while the four police hid in the bedroom. Early on Sunday morning, Ned Kelly and Steve Hart rode into Glenrowan and tried to prise up the rails on the embankment; but found that the bolts had rusted. They went to the station, bailed up the stationmaster, and collected two platelayers who lifted a length of rail at the pistol's point. Then, as was their custom, they commandeered a hotel ("The Glenrowan") and filled it with a rapidly growing muster of prisoners, who soon numbered more than sixty. Dan Kelly and Joe Byrne arrived to join them, and, while the landlady served hot meals and drinks, they awaited the arrival of the special train.

But there is one eventuality for which a clever and enterprising tactician must make allowances: that the adversary may show neither cleverness nor enterprise. When the news of Sherritt's murder reached Benalla, there were confusions, delays, and jealousies among the police officers, and lengthy consultations by telegraph with Melbourne. And it was not until Monday morning—by which time the outlaws had been forty-eight hours without sleep, and had drunk more than was good for them—that a train neared Glenrowan station. Nor was it the expected Benalla special: but a train that had come all the way up from Melbourne and which carried, in addition to reinforcements of mounted police and black trackers, four journalists, and the wife and sister of one of the officers, for good measure.

A Glenrowan schoolmaster called Curnow (whose name, for his courage, should surely be sung too in the Kelly ballads) braved the guns of the gang—and, perhaps even more dangerous, the guns of the police contingent—and stopped the train outside Glenrowan by holding a candle behind his wife's red scarf. The police detrained and mounted their horses, and at three o'clock in the morning of Monday, June 28th, the Battle of Glenrowan began.

For a detailed description of the battle, which lasted well into the afternoon, the reader is referred to the accounts in the Kelly

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biographies.* One must envisage a country hotel, containing sixty men, women, and children, and four desperadoes, many of them drunk and most of them terrified, while upwards of fifty policemen and black trackers blazed away at the building more or less indiscriminately for twelve hours. Bizarre and macabre incidents were not lacking. Joe Byrne was the first casualty, shot in the groin (through the slit above the apron of his armour) as he was drinking whisky in the bar —less than two days after he had murdered Aaron Sherritt. Maggie, the Kellys' sister, erupted suddenly on horseback, wearing a Gainsborough hat, and tried to join her brothers in the hotel. (The police prevented her.) When the non-combatants made a wild sortie to try to escape, the police, somewhat naturally, supposed some of them to be gangsters; and a Mrs. Reardon, mistaken for Dan Kelly in disguise, was shot in the buttocks by a police sergeant.

In the late afternoon, the police set the hotel on fire; and Father Gibney (soon to become a bishop) dashed into the blazing building to administer the last rites. The priest found Dan Kelly and Steve Hart dead upon the floor; but before the police could drag out their bodies, the flames consumed them. Meanwhile Ned Kelly had been captured after a gun battle in the hotel yard. His armour had hindered more than helped him; for, wounded in the arms, he could neither reload nor take proper aim; and, as his blood flowed, the heavy metal weighed him down. They shot at his legs and bowled him over. He had twenty-eight bullet wounds in his body.

ON OCTOBER 28th, 1880, Ned Kelly confronted Judge Sir Redmond Barry. No witnesses were called for the defence; and, by a peculiarity of the legal procedure in those days, the prisoner could not, even if he wished to, give evidence for himself. But the author of the "Jerilderie Letter" had not said his last word yet. When the judge asked the formal question, "Have you anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?" an extraordinary dialogue ensued. Kelly calmly embarked on a Socratic disquisition, to which the judge—though the black cap was upon his head—apparently found it quite impossible not to answer. The scandalous exchange continued right up till the last words of the sentence. "I will add something to that," said Kelly, when the judge had finally done. "I will see you where I am going." (Judge Barry was dead within the month.)

A meeting of protest against the sentence was attended by 6,000 people, and there were 30,000 signatures to a petition for reprieve. In jail, he was visited by his mother (also a prisoner there), by his sister Maggie, and by his youngest brother Jim (who lived on in the Kelly Country until December 1946). He was hanged at the age of twenty-five years five months, and as Upjohn, the executioner, pulled the cap down over his face, he said, "Such is life!"

A myth cannot be made out of the life of a mere murderer. Perhaps one might even say it was Kelly's tragedy that he was not just a criminal like the bushrangers of the fifties and sixties: tragic that he was, in his way, a reformer, a bold man troubled by ideas in the wrong age. Born earlier, in social conditions of greater flexibility, he might have achieved the honourable immortality of the men of the Eureka Stockade; born later . . . does he not greatly resemble the consecrated heroes of the Irish troubles? But although, in the 1870's, he was, in a confused and groping way, the symbolic figure of a general social frustration, he had neither the knowledge nor the experience to become what he seems really to have been—a revolutionary political leader.

So he was left with nothing but his white courage, his hot sense of justice, and his arrogant instinct for revolt, which burst out into wasted deeds of destructive bravery, and into the dark poetry of his writing.

THE reader will understand that, to portray Kelly's life and legend worthily, an Australian artist (for it could be no other) must have imaginative and plastic gifts of an unusual kind. It is also clear that the painter who attempts this task must be master of two different pictorial means which are usually, and quite mistakenly, thought to be incompatible: he must be a narrative painter, since the Kelly myth is firmly rooted in a story;

* For instance, to the admirable narrative in *The Kelly Hunters*, by Mr. Frank Clune, to which I am indebted for most of the information in this essay.

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yet he must also be an artist who understands the language of conceptual painting, for a myth cannot be portrayed today convincingly in naturalistic terms.

The first series of Kelly pictures* that Sidney Nolan painted was done between 1945 and 1947 in Melbourne. Each of these pictures represented a particular episode in the Kelly story—for each, one can find a chapter and verse in the biographical text. The scale was large, and the execution deliberately rather "naïve." I did not myself, at the time, admire this quality in the pictures, because I felt this "primitive" treatment to be, on the part of an artist I knew to be highly accomplished, a somewhat systematic and artful way of achieving an atmosphere of "folklore" in these pictures. Mr. Nolan has told me that his use of this method was quite deliberate, for the reason that, as there are practically no "folk" forms from which one can borrow in Australia, he wished to invent some for himself. I now like this early series very much better than I did—no doubt, in part, because I have seen the even more successful later one; and I realise how this summary, "folk image" style did enable Nolan, in his initial encounter with the Kelly story, to capture its spirit in a convincing, timeless, legendary way.

Between 1947 and 1955, Nolan abandoned the Kelly theme, and painted pictures of two different kinds. Some were series describing other stories—that of the Eureka Stockade, or of the fantastic explorations of Burke and Wills. The others were "from nature": pictures of old colonial hotels, "out-back" farming scenes, paintings of animals cast away in droughts (a recurrent catastrophe in Australia), and, best known in England, the aerial views of the enormous nothingness of the central deserts.* These drought and desert pictures, of hopeless carcasses and cratered emptiness, seemed striking as visual images, but not always so interesting in their colours or their forms.

Good artists, I think, do not progress steadily up some gradual slope of excellence, but, after periods on some splendid flatness, leap suddenly to greater, unexpected heights. It is this that has happened in the new Kelly series of 1955.† The "naïve" style has gone, and the invented shapes are now intellectually more coherent, and plastically more ingenious; the colours, unlike those of the earlier landscapes, are luminous, rich, and varied; while the presentation of the Kelly myth has gained a new magic and imaginative power.

The authentic Kelly armour is exhibited (and only Australians would know why) in the Melbourne aquarium. A kindly honorary uncle used to take me there in the 1920's; and, even allowing for the hallucinatory power of images seen in childhood, the shapes of the helmet and the breastplates are unforgettable to me now: potent and dynamic, menacing yet reassuring. Nolan has given his hero this metallic face and body, as he rides and strides through the enormous bush, striking terror, and constantly facing it. The mood of these pictures is sardonic, brutal, sad, and tender. The story unfolds itself painfully and poetically in the successive episodes, and all the loss and sorrow of a rare young life thrown on to the scrap-heap are dignified, ennobled, and redeemed.

*First shown in England, in 1953, at the exhibition of "Twelve Australian Artists" in the New Burlington Galleries.

* First seen in London at the Redfern Gallery, in 1950.

† Redfern Gallery, May 1955.

Colin MacInnes

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Letter from GENEVA

The Uranium Fair

"I THINK I'll have to change my occupation," said the Italian colleague who accompanied me from the Palais des Nations to the town. His voice held a note of humorous despair. "This conference! I don't understand a word, do you? I studied international law and economics. I've learnt my job at a couple of dozen international conferences; I made friends there and established private sources of information, and then—then I have to report on—wait a moment, let's see if I've got it right. Yes, on the thermal inelastic dispersal of cold neutrons in polycrystalline solids!" He breathed out noisily, like a four-year-old who has managed to get through his birthday verses without a mistake. "That was the title of this morning's lecture, by an Indian. I listened to the discussion afterwards, too, in all the four languages, but they were all Chinese to me."

This tragi-comic wail of an experienced diplomatic correspondent who felt completely out of place at the recent conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy was not an isolated complaint. An outstanding European physicist, one of the originators of the theory of the process of nuclear fusion in the sun, confessed outright when I met him wandering aimlessly along the endless corridors of the Palais des Nations that he had simply run away from the meeting. "My head was swimming. When the youngsters start a discussion in their jargon about the meson theory, then of my generation only Bethe and Weiskopf can keep up with them. I felt completely lost."

If, as many predict, the Geneva atomic conference will come to be regarded as a turning-point in history, most of the surviving reporters and observers, and a not inconsiderable number of the delegates, will have to confess frankly to the reporters of A.D. 2000: "Yes, we were there, but we didn't understand more than a fraction of what was happening."

STILL, a breeze from this newest of worlds which has been created since the splitting of uranium in a Dahlem laboratory seventeen years ago brushed all of us in those two weeks in Geneva. My neighbour at dinner in the students' hostel where I took my evening meals, one of those admirably zealous if rather crotchety Englishwomen of advanced age who are usually to be found at this time of the year in every park and museum on the Continent, talked of practically nothing else, in the intervals between courses, but gamma rays and alpha particles, and hyperion, which "had such a romantic name." The taxi-driver caught in a traffic jam who shouted to the chauffeur of the immense Cadillac in front of him: "*Va donc, sale isotope*," only confirmed the fears of the Swiss Nobel prizewinner who deplored the popularisation of his esoteric science.

A few weeks before, the same Swiss scientist, asked if he were attending the conference, replied condescendingly: "I'm not interested in this uranium fair." And it is true that the conference had something of the fair about it, a touch of the annual market and perhaps also of the circus. The "wild beast" of our day was made to jump through hoops, and it showed great tractability. The instrument originally designed to grasp by remote control the highly radioactive "critical mass" at the heart of the bomb mechanism was used to light cigarettes and pour good Swiss milk. Genetic mutations caused by radiation were demonstrated by red and white carnations growing from the same stem—a substitute for the Siamese twins usually shown at fairs. And thousands of

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visitors who wanted a change from illuminated grottoes could rejoice in the magical blue light given off by the reactor flown in from the United States. The ordinary well-educated European reacted to the exhibits in much the same way as bushmen listening for the first time to a clock. The encounter between modern achievements and primitive life, which used to occur only when field workers set out to investigate so-called natives, is now being enacted, not in some distant jungle or desert, but in Europe, and we ourselves are the savages who smile because "it ticks." What cannot be understood easily acquires the reputation of magic, and whoever controls it a sorcerer. It is ironical that in our day this magician's mantle should have fallen on the atomic scientists, for as scientists they are not merely sceptical of but positively hostile to superstitions and magic formulas. Nevertheless their position in society has forced them into the part; in revealing ancient mysteries they have won still deeper secrets and become the masters of still greater forces, only part understood.

Had they not demonstrated that they are dealing with forces capable of destroying the world, they would be of no greater interest than botanists or lepidopterists. Now they had become the showpiece of the Geneva fair, and visitors looked for some external sign of grace or damnation, a horn or a cloven hoof, and saw nothing but ordinary men. The one "genuinely scientific type" who flitted like a spectre through the corridors, apparently deep in thought, turned out to be a New York photographer. Perhaps it was he who was responsible for the photographs on sale which did their best to substitute for reality the current image. Otto Hahn, for example, who looks like a distinguished German officer (which in fact he was during the First World War), has been turned into a sort of Dr. Faustus, with glittering eyes and wild hair; while Vladimirsky, a typical Russian peasant in appearance, was photographed in front of a brightly lit screen, pointing like the shadow of a modern Daniel to his mysterious inscription.

"Of course we look like any Tom, Dick, or Harry," growled one of the few scientists whose appearance was out of the ordinary. "We've become like all the rest. We're interested in our careers, we want a good life and we use our stock-in-trade"—he tapped his enormous close-cropped head—"to the best advantage. Unfortunately we're no longer outsiders, but useful and highly-honoured and, consequently, unfree members of society. Nothing pulls you down so much as quick success. Spiritually, it's brought us down to the level of the average."

SELF-CRITICAL remarks of this kind were not, it is true, heard often. From the first the mood was good, indeed at times euphoric, and it is worth asking why. "It's like an equation coming out," one of the delegates said to me as we sat on a high open terrace blinking in the brilliant August sunlight. "You see, I've always hoped that in the end it would come out right. It wasn't possible that mankind would go on for ever torturing and destroying each other. Now at last everybody sees this, and we here"—he pointed to the blue and white button worn by the scientists taking part in the conference —"are apparently responsible for this. Without our little gadgets the politicians would still be banging the table with their fists."

The German scientist, Professor Gentner, not usually inclined to sentiment, had another explanation. "At bottom all we atomic scientists are one large family, and it's a long time since we had such a full family gathering." I had heard the term "family" used before to describe the original small group of atomic scientists. Between 1919 and 1939 they numbered about two dozen, of all nations and races, and at least once a year they used to meet in Copenhagen, where the paterfamilias, Niels Bohr, lived. Over sandwiches and coffee they would discuss the problems of their work into the early hours. Those were the good days, when the politicians and the public were not interested in physics. They had little funds, and few expensive instruments. For the most part they rigged up their own experimental equipment, which in any case was not so important as their calculations; above all, they had the time to discuss, speculate, postulate. Those were the heroic years of atomic science.

"At that time—it sounds utterly incredible now—Gamow in Leningrad could cable the results of his work, mathematical formulas which must have turned the telegraphist's hair grey," one of Bohr's "family" told me. "A few years later he had to flee to the West, after Bukharin had asked him whether his

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experiments might not have some practical value. He offered to put the entire electric current of Leningrad at the scientist's disposal for one night. That was in 1934."

In that year history began to tear the family apart. Some of its most prominent members came to Copenhagen not as visitors, but seeking asylum, either because they had been driven from their posts in Germany, or because life in Japan or Italy, in the Soviet Union or Poland, had become intolerable. The sense of community was still strong enough to override political and ideological divergences among the scientists. Then, close on each other's heels, came the successful fission experiments of Hahn, Lise Meitner, Joliot-Curie, and Fermi, followed by the outbreak of war. Would the German members of the family deny Hitler their knowledge? A secret understanding, a kind of tacit agreement not to use the new forces for war was suggested, but it came to nothing. Mistrust and misunderstanding were greater than decades of close personal acquaintance and intellectual kinship. The atomic race had begun, and everywhere, more or less willingly, the members of the family undertook the work. "We were only a family," one of them said to me, "and we should have been an Order."

The end of the war did not bring the family together again. Men whose entire lives had made them enemies of war were compelled to construct still more terrible weapons, and advocates of open and unrestricted scientific intercourse were not even allowed to discuss their work. Then, almost too abruptly, came the Geneva conference. For the first time for more than twenty years scientists could again behave as their unwritten code, and the unwritten law of the spirit of Copenhagen, prescribed. Or at least almost. . . . For the family gathering was not quite complete at Geneva. Peter Kapitza was absent, at one time one of the most outstanding members of the "family." In 1934 he returned to the Soviet Union for a "short visit," and since then he has never returned to his old friends in the West. Him, still their most renowned and probably best atomic physicist, the Russians did not send to Geneva, nor his colleague Landau. The Americans left Urey, Pauling, Condon and Oppenheimer at home; all of them in the last few years had tried to go their own way. The French were not prepared to forgive Joliot-Curie his political experiments. The most eminent of the Germans, too, was absent: Werner Heisenberg refused to lead the German delegation, apparently because he disapproves of the Bonn government's handling of atomic questions. And practically all the Japanese physicists were on strike as a protest against the agreements of their government with the American Atomic Energy Commission.

ATOMIC research and development thus remain in the realm of politics. Politics will determine the distribution of atomic fuel and the training of engineers and mechanics for the reactors, as well as the rate of progress in the technically developed as well as technically underdeveloped countries. Can the new force in its turn compel politics to adopt new forms? Most of the 1,400 delegates would have answered such a question in the affirmative. As the conference went on, and the scientists recognised the similarity of many of their problems, they felt themselves to be, as it were, pacemakers who would have to carry their political leaders along with them. One of them in private conversation said enthusiastically: "The politicians started this thing to make political capital out of it. Well, something real has come out of their make-believe. A sort of spontaneous fusion is going on here which will release immense new energies." At which a colleague interjected sceptically: "We physicists are kidding ourselves again. We think we can do great political things, but in our professional life we can't even agree about the cleaning women in our laboratories."

Scarcely any other science has had from the outset so marked an international character. English, French, Italian, German, Austrian, an unusually large number of Hungarians, Scandinavians, Dutch, Russian, and many from the American melting-pot fathered atomic physics. That is one reason why it was not so difficult for these men to find new homes when events forced on them the rôle of refugees. A Russian name among the delegates as likely as not indicated an American or Canadian passport; there was a Schubert whose home is in Chicago, an Argentinian named Flegenheimer, a French delegate named Horowitz, and an Indian called Peters.

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Separated by walls of secrecy scaled occasionally by spies and by others who on principle despise "security" measures, the atomic scientists in each country trod independently the path prescribed by the logic of natural phenomena. Here in Geneva they began to compare the results of their work, and found that for the most part their calculations coincided to less than a hairsbreadth — the differences could be expressed in millionths of a millimetre. "It gives me real emotional satisfaction," the young American Hughes said at one of the sessions, "to see these three curves—ours, the English, and the Russian—of the measurement of nuclear fission superimposed. They are identical." Later, at a press conference, he proposed that the curve, which resembled an outline sketch of the Matterhorn, should be adopted as the symbol of the conference. Rarely, indeed, has the absurdity of the duplication of scientific efforts been so apparent. How many millions, how many hours, months, and years, and what burdensome precautions were necessary to reach these identical results in the three countries! Perhaps our age should be called the age not of Prometheus but of Sisyphus.

From this comparison of results the Western experts were convinced that the Russians, independently of what their espionage agents contributed, were perfectly able to conduct successful atomic research on their own. "I don't believe for a moment that Klaus Fuchs's treachery gave them much new information," an American physicist said to me. "The Soviet authorities said they knew nothing of Fuchs and that might well have been the case. Perhaps his secret messages landed in a bureaucratic pigeon-hole. More likely the service to which he reported kept them a secret from other Soviet services. Possibly the Soviet physicists never even received Fuchs's reports because this 'cosmopolitan' was no longer trusted. Or I can quite imagine someone in some Soviet security office comparing Fuchs's information with the results reached by the Soviet physicists, with the sole purpose of checking whether perhaps they were engaged in passive resistance or even sabotage. That may have been the real tragedy of Klaus Fuchs—that his actions had no effect at all. In a mistrustful world, caution and suspicion operate within a country as well as between countries, and that was something which the politically naïve Fuchs, for all his dialectic training, did not understand."

AT GENEVA, it was clear that the scientist, and in particular the nuclear physicist, has become a problem in himself. He is preoccupied not only with the subject of his research but with himself, his place in society, the way in which he is "used" and sometimes made the instrument of purposes alien to himself, with the rightness and wrongness of his actions, with good and evil, and even, if usually with all reserve, with God. When he analyses political, social, and historical ideas, or discusses questions of philosophy and theology, the expert in these fields may smile condescendingly, as he himself is wont to smile at the excursions of non-experts into physics and mathematics, but nobody can deny the depth and gravity of the experiences which prompt him, nor the seriousness of his efforts to find truths outside his own scientific field.

Perhaps this by-product of scientific research is to be welcomed. For the shattering discoveries the physicists have already made, and those they undoubtedly will make, present other fields of intellectual effort with tasks of the utmost urgency and importance. When, within a single generation, such immensely powerful forces have come into men's hands, when the fate not only of their own but of future generations depends on the integrity and accuracy of their thinking, then those studies which paled and dwindled in the massive shadow of the natural sciences acquire a new value. The naïveté and perplexity of atomic scientists in their approach to ethical and political questions are an indictment of the moral scientists, the philosophers, sociologists, and theologians who have done little to prepare the physicists for the moral emergencies which confront them.

Sometimes—particularly at the beginning of the conference—it seemed as though the really great decisions had already been made. The fear of universal destruction seemed at last to have filled the breach created by the absence of a universally compelling morality. The visitor could, without too great anxiety, admire the magnificent new machines and the intoxicating statistics of their future operation. The sense of renewed kinship among scientists of different nations and different systems seemed to rise superior to

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the absence of a just and lawful world order. But sobering voices penetrated from the conference rooms, once more putting the question of responsibility for the future of the human race.

Perhaps the words of these killjoys, the doctors, biologists, and geneticists, would not have been heard so clearly but for the somewhat tactless remarks of one of them which drew the attention of the entire conference. At a morning session on the biological effects of radiation Sir Ernest Rock Carling, Medical Research Council adviser to the Home Office, spoke on the medical aspects of injuries caused by atomic radiation. In the course of his speech he referred also to genetical injuries caused by over-exposure to radiation and said: "In a world contemplating a future in which the expansion of its population may outrange its food supply, it is conceivable that diminished fertility and shortening of life span might not be altogether to be deplored. . . . In so far, however, as a diminution of general intelligence might result, speculation is depressing, but it is to be hoped that there may still be spots of extremely high intelligence which would suffice to leaven the lump." To the non-geneticist it might seem that the advantage to the future of the human race as a whole "of one mutation which results in an Aristotle, a Leonardo, a Newton, a Gauss, a Pasteur, or an Einstein might well outweigh ninety-nine that led to mental defectives."

As was only to be expected, Sir Ernest was immediately answered by other scientists at the session. The Swedish geneticist Ake Gustavsson pointed out that while one single mutation sufficed to produce an idiot, the production of the infinitely rare genius involved the entire complex cell structure. More important than the details of the argument was its repercussions on the debate concerning the effects of the new forces on health and heredity. Until then it had, as it were, been proceeding on the periphery of the conference; now it was thrust into the foreground. The danger now was seen not in atomic warfare, which it seemed might never take place, nor merely in the frequency of experimental explosions, but simply in the tremendous increase in the amount of radioactive material which would be generated by the prospective introduction throughout the world of electrical power derived from nuclear fission.

JACK SCHUBERT, a gentle and slightly melancholy radio-biologist who ranks as one of America's leading experts, said to me at the garden party given by the City of Geneva for the conference: "Of the strongest chemical poisons that we know, one gram is enough to kill a man. But a man can be killed slowly by one millionth of a gram of radium." Nearby a Swiss orchestra was playing a cheerful melody. I tried to get Mr. Schubert to talk of other things but he wanted to finish his macabre symphony. "Radio-activity, you know, is measured in curies. One curie is the amount of radiation given out by one gram of radium. From the discovery of radium until today, that is in fifty-seven years, we have produced in all 1500 grams with a total radiation of 1500 curies. But since we started building reactors, that is in just about thirteen years, we have produced fissionable material with a radio-activity of hundreds of millions of curies. Soon it will run into billions and more billions. A powerful stream of poison, usually kept under one roof with boilers. . . . There have been remarkably few accidents so far. But as the number of installations increases, and they come to be supervised by men without the careful training and specialised skills we have now, what happens then? And if the competitive struggle to reduce the enormously high costs of safety measures and health protection. . . ." He broke off. "You'll have to do something about it," he said in his gentle, unexcited way. "It really can't go on like this, with radio-active waste dumped into the sea and blown into the air, without any international arrangements to cover the despatch of radio-active isotopes, which are being used more and more for industrial experiments. There's an incredible frivolity in the way this poison is being handled."

I wonder into how many other atoms-for-peace cocktails Mr. Schubert dropped his bitters.

Robert Jungk

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Dwight Macdonald

No Miracle in Milan

In last month's issue, we published a report by Edward Shils on the Milan Conference on "The Future of Freedom." Here, we present a dissenting opinion by Dwight Macdonald. Mr. Macdonald is a leading American critic and journalist who is at present a staff writer on "The New Yorker." Previously, he was an editor of "Partisan Review," and for several years published his own magazine, "Politics."

FROM September 12th to September 17th, some hundred and fifty economists, sociologists, historians, political experts, philosophers, writers, and other intellectuals came together in Milan from all over the world—a score from Asia and Africa—to discuss The Future of Freedom under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Over fifty papers, specially prepared for the occasion, provided—in theory at least—the groundwork of the discussion. "There are already signs of a tendency to rethink our conventional political ideas in the light of recent history," stated the call to the Conference. "The Conference is in the nature of a research project. Its aim is primarily critical: to distinguish between real problems and pseudo-problems, actual alternatives and specious ones, in order to be able to define our dilemmas and our prospects as they really are. We hope that . . . some fresh insight will be gained into the authentic bases of liberty in our time."

The hope, in my opinion, was not fulfilled. It is true that a number of the papers—perhaps as many as a dozen, a good batting average—were on a high level and made original contributions. And it is true that a more satisfactory theory of the basis of freedom was generally agreed on at the Conference than the traditional Marxian-liberal one: namely, that it depends not on political institutions or economic systems but rather on the moral choice of human beings, shaped by tradition, to achieve and defend it. There was also general agreement, in line with this, that, as Raymond Aron put it in his paper, "The political categories of the last century—Left and Right, liberal and socialist, traditionalist and revolutionary—have lost their relevance." But it was hardly necessary to bring together so many thinkers from the ends of the earth to establish these truths—which, in fact, were already sketched out in the call to the Conference itself. The trouble with the Conference was, quite simply, that it was unable to confer: it was too large and too heterogeneous to permit the most elementary kind of discussion. It resembled less the academy of Plato and Socrates than the Tower of Babel or, to use a more up-to-date simile, a subway rush. This might have been avoided had the Conference divided into a number of reasonably small round-table panels instead of holding all its sessions *en masse*, which required that all speakers, even the ones who had written papers under discussion at the session, be limited to a maximum of five minutes apiece (sometimes cut to three and even two). There was thus no chance for the full development of anybody's ideas, nor for that cross-discussion essential to any real interchange of thought. There were also other factors, to which I shall return later. Meanwhile, let me try to describe the Conference somewhat as a drama critic might report on a play (a conference being essentially a dramatic—or, alas, undramatic

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—spectacle). This method probably tends to underestimate the Conference, since it deals with the papers only in so far as they entered into the discussions on the floor, and since it takes no account of the off-floor contacts between delegates. But to have "covered" the papers would have been to have written a small book. Nor can I generalise about what happened outside the Conference, due to the fact that a body (mine) cannot be in two or indeed two dozen places at once. What follows is simply what I heard and saw, plus a few reactions of my own.

SOME random impressions may set the stage. . . . The Conference was held in the Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnica, a large, modern building in a large, modern city which differs from New York chiefly in the streets being cleaner and the tempo of pedestrians and traffic being faster. . . . The delegates were uniform as to dress—soft white collar, subdued professorial necktie—but not as to physique. All sizes and shapes—cigarillo, panatela, perfecto, Corona Corona. The large, billowing one who walked on his toes, seeming about to float into the air like a balloon with every step; the short, square one, Mr. Five by Five; the lanky stork, the bottle-shouldered giraffe, the hirsute bison, the quick dapper wren, the sedate swan. . . . Popping of earphones as listeners switched on the interpreters at the beginning of a speech, like the crackling of a brush fire. . . . England's imperial past could be inferred, all else failing, from the British accents, clipped and flat, of some of the Asian and African delegates. . . . The self-conscious look of the speaker walking back to his seat after performing: modest, virtuous, complacent—Cincinnatus returning to the plough, having deserved well of his country. . . . The dry, logical, almost pedantic delivery of the Indians; the rhetoric, now passionate, now elegant, of the French; the polysyllabic lucubrations of the Germans; the diffident reasonableness of the British—"I suggest that. . . . It seems to me. . . . Personally, I must doubt. . . . Can one honestly say. . . . It would be a pity (or tiresome)." . . . Most beautiful delegates: S. L. Akintola (Nigeria) and Bertrand de Jouvenel (France), the former because of his red plush fez, strong black face slashed with ritual scars, and flowing white homespun robes; the latter for his handsome grey beard, trimmed and curled like Jove in an 18th century engraving. . . . The interpreters, whose forensic style was usually more dramatic than that of the speakers—no great feat, for the most part—sometimes forgot to go off the air. After dutifully translating a rather long-winded speech, one was clearly heard, over the earphones, to remark to a colleague in her booth: "But why does he have to say everything twice over?" . . . Some good things were said: "The difference between an old-fashioned dictator and a totalitarian leader is that the former rides a horse while the latter is the head of a centaur" (Franz Boehm, Germany). "A vague word like freedom should be used vaguely" (Stuart Hampshire, England). The gloss of Peter Wiles of Oxford, one of the Conference's two Bad Boys—the other being the rambunctious Alexander Weissberg-Cybulski — on George Kennan's plea for "the gardener's approach to international problems": "Let us water the weeds in the Soviet garden." . . . The joke, best and almost the only one, of the proceedings, passed on by Professor Talmon of Israel: "A man asked at a bookstore for a copy of the French Constitution. 'Sorry, we don't handle periodicals.'" . . . And two remarks by Prince Kukrit Pramoj of Thailand, most aristocratic and wittiest of the delegates: "As a common bond with you Westerners, let me admit that we Asiatics feel as racially superior to you as you do to us. . . . Since my country has never been under the rule of a colonial power, we are in the unhappy position of having to blame ourselves for our shortcomings."

THE Conference got off to a slow start with a session, held in a gloomy, cavernous auditorium downstairs, at which Hugh Gaitskell, Aldo Garosci, Frederich Hayek, Sidney Hook, and Michael Polanyi made speeches, some of which were interesting (when I read them later), but all of which were, or at least seemed to be, quite long. There was no fire, no drama, no sparkle, and as one speaker — or, more often, reader — followed another, I could not but think of Dr. Johnson's asking why he should go to a lecture to hear imperfectly what he could read at ease at home. Several rows of seats were reserved for citizens of Milan but, although great cloth banners were

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strung across many of the main streets advertising the Conference, only a few Milanese came to this or any other session. Among them was the Chief of Police, who put everyone at their ease by presently lighting up a cigarette under a large VIETATO FUMARE sign.

The rest of the sessions were held upstairs in a long, light, airy, pillared hall dominated by a large white plaster bust of Da Vinci. It was a handsome setting, but not a practical one, the acoustics being so bad that the speakers could be heard *viva voce* only in the first few rows. Everybody else had to use the earphones, which cut off the speakers, psychologically, from the audience and gave a dead, formal quality to the meetings.

The most interesting sessions, in my opinion, and indeed the only ones where discussion really got started and kept alive, were those of Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, which were skilfully chaired by Minoo Masani (India) and Hugh Gaitskell (England) respectively. The former had a definite and controversial topic—the success or failure of Soviet industrial production relative to that of the West—on which two Oxford economists, Peter Wiles and Colin Clark, held sharply opposed views. Mr. Wiles presented a closely reasoned paper whose very title—"What Is to be Done about the Success of Soviet Industry"—was provocative; also, as Bertram D. Wolfe (U.S.A.) pointed out, loaded. "The most important fact in all modern economics," he began, "is that the rate of growth of productivity in the manufacturing industry of the Soviet Union is higher than in that of any free country at the period of its maximum development, let alone now." He gave eight reasons for this, including the freedom to plan, the emasculation of trade unions, and the centralisation of authority, and he suggested that the West could save itself only by imitating such Soviet specialities as centralised planning. (A curious inversion of Stalin's "We must catch up with and overtake capitalist economy.") The damage to freedom, he thought, would not be great "in the Protestant lands of North-Western Europe, the British Commonwealth, and possibly the U.S.A." because "here parliamentary democracy and a few other quite ordinary legal safeguards are check enough upon an omnipotent State machine." A long list of speakers disagreed strongly with practically every item in Mr. Wiles's thesis. Although Mr. Clark was unable to be present, his paper, a detailed and scornful refutation of the claim that Soviet industry was outstripping the West, was summarised. Perhaps the weightiest intervention was that of George F. Kennan, the former American Ambassador to Moscow, who, after questioning the Wiles figures, pointed out that whatever industrial progress the Soviet Union had made was achieved at the sacrifice of consumer's goods, transport, housing, and farm output. "I question whether the Soviet leaders themselves look back today with unmixed satisfaction on the cost of and the results of the experiment they have conducted. And I think that our friends from the underdeveloped areas, some of whom have a tendency to envy the West for its most outworn institutions, would do well to take care that they do not turn to Moscow for a type of industrial development which Russia herself has already outgrown and from which she has become much the wiser." At this session, also, Bertrand de Jouvenel (France) summarised his brilliant and well-documented "Some Fundamental Similarities between the Soviet and Capitalist Economic Systems." Starting off from the familiar, and false, antithesis often drawn between political freedom in the West and economic freedom in the U.S.S.R. (which he termed "intellectual primitivism" or "the tendency to believe that abstract terms, designated by capital letters, are 'things' and that alterations in these terms can alter the real state of affairs"), de Jouvenel set out quite simply to apply the same terms to similar features of the two economic systems. The result, as might be expected, is that Soviet "socialism" emerges as merely a less efficient, and infinitely more brutal, form of capitalism. After two hours of almost continual bombardment from his critics, Mr. Wiles arose, apparently unruffled, and in the best Oxford Union manner, blending candour, courtesy, and insolence ("I have been under very heavy fire. I will try to reply to every objection. I think that every one of them is wrong."), deftly blunted or turned aside each missile.

This excellent start was, unfortunately, not sustained. That afternoon's session, devoted to the problems of underdeveloped countries, was diffuse and spiritless. It was not the topic but rather the unfocussed nature of

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the discussion that was at fault. Things picked up Wednesday morning, again because of the English, whose experience in give-and-take argument made them the undoubted stars of the Conference, at least from my drama-critic's point of view. R. H. S. Crossman offered a sweeping and provocative thesis: the trouble with modern politics is not, as Walter Lippman claims, that the experts pay too much attention to public opinion but that they pay too little; the intellectuals are arrogant ("We are all crypto-Platonists, philosopher kings") when they should be humble *vis-à-vis* the masses, since it was the intellectuals and not the masses who were responsible for Fascism and Communism; all political issues are, basically, simple moral choices, and it is the function of the intellectuals to formulate them in such simple terms that the man in the street can answer "Yes" or "No." This was vigorously attacked as demagogic and even potentially totalitarian by a long line of speakers, the most devastating being Stuart Hampshire and Denis Healey; to all of which Crossman replied, with true British phlegm, that he was glad to have served as Socratic gadfly, which indeed he had.

THE rest of the Conference had its ups and downs, which it would be tedious to chronicle in detail. So I shall only touch on some of the high spots, hoping the reader will remember there were low spots as well, arid stretches between these oases. Journalistically, the high spots were: the reports of Joseph Scholmer (Germany) and Herbert Passin (U.S.A.), based on recent information from Europeans and Japanese just released from Soviet labour camps, of the remarkable current softening of the regimen of the camps and the closing down of some of them; the dramatic announcement, on Saturday morning, of the outbreak of the now successful anti-Peron revolt in Argentina by a delegate (Señor Gholdi) who was about to fly back to take part in it (we all applauded enthusiastically, though perhaps prematurely in the light of later information about the political complexion of the rebels); and the speech of Adriano Olivetti, the Milanese industrialist responsible for, among other things, the typewriter on which this is written. He presided over the final session and revealed himself to be a more impassioned theoretician and a more radical social thinker than some of the delegates. He denounced the State with anarchist vehemence, deplored "this decadent society," and roundly condemned "the occult power of party apparatuses" and "the schemes of centralising politicians."

There were also a number of dramatic clashes. . . . Daniel Bell, labour editor of *Fortune*, whose paper, "The Ambiguities of Mass Society, and the Complexities of American Life," made an interesting case for the original view that American mass culture has a lot to be said for it in human terms, was taken to task by his fellow-American, George Kennan, who began, "I cannot share the complacency of Mr. Bell on American life," and proceeded to an itemised indictment: the decay of local government, poor schools, juvenile delinquency, uncreative recreation (notably TV), the atomisation of the family by the suburban mode of living, the totalitarian tendencies shown in McCarthyism. . . . Hannah Arendt (U.S.A.) declined to make a summary of her brilliant and complex paper on totalitarianism ("I am a firm non-believer in digests, of which in America we have too much rather than too little") and was rebuked by Sidney Hook (U.S.A.): "I had looked forward to Miss Arendt's summary because I must confess I found the paper tantalisingly obscure." (He later described himself as "an unreconstructed 18th century rationalist"; his opponent might be described as a reconstructed Hegelian.) To which Arendt: "I'm sorry, Sidney, we always have the same argument. I'm willing to bet any amount of money that if I had made the most succinct summary imaginable, you would still say it was obscure." . . . Minoo Masani (India), known for his opposition to Nehru's neutralist position and his support of the West, caused a sensation with a speech sharply critical of Western policies in Asia, in which he depicted Indian public opinion as predominantly pro-Soviet and wound up: "Communism gives us a sense of belonging to something. But we can't belong to America." He was hotly answered by Gaitskell and other English delegates, more coolly by Kennan ("I think we should all beware of causes for causes' sake"). . . . The American sociologist, Edward Shils, attacked the Polish poet, Czeslaw Milosz—whose paper, "Belinski and the Unicorn," was notable for its imagination and its style, qualities not over-

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whelmingly present in the papers in general, the chief other exceptions occurring to me being those of Manès Sperber (France) and Michael Freund (Germany)—"because he accepts the idea of a heroic life and wants everyone to be a political hero." It is precisely the totalitarian régimes, he added, that demand that everybody be heroically politicalised; but the common people, rightly, are moved by more mundane, earthy considerations—"The deserters from the Red Army don't defect because of their ideals; they work those up afterwards." To which Milosz: this is a typically philistine and American point of view; these are crucial times when heroism, or at least political seriousness, are necessary if our ideals of freedom are to survive.

THE five-minute rule, unavoidable given the size of the sessions, was a bed of Procrustes on which those with little to say stretched out their speeches while those with much to say had to cut off their discourse in the prime of life. Chairing such a session is obviously a fine art. I thought the most accomplished practitioners were John K. Galbraith (U.S.A.) and Hugh Gaitskell (England), partly because they kept the speakers to the point with repeated pleas not to take the floor unless they had some question, comment, criticism, or even insult relevant to the papers being discussed at that particular session, and partly because of their pleasant but firm manipulation of the closing bell. Most of the speakers subsided after a reasonable amount of bell-tinkling—though one turned around and said courteously, "I'm very sorry, Mr. Chairman, but I do not want to be interrupted here"—but not the formidable Weissberg-Cybulski, who on one occasion continued a vehement peroration not only after several ringings of the bell but even after he had been warmly applauded, under the mistaken impression that he had finished; and on another, having been granted a special ten minutes to speak on the situation in the Soviet satellites after he had demanded the topic be inserted into the agenda, took double even that allowance. The chairmen who had to cope with him must have had a sneaking sympathy with the NKVD officials who, as described in Weissberg-Cybulski's fascinating memoir, *The Accused* (in Britain, *The Conspiracy of Silence*), wore themselves out one after another trying to cross-examine him during the 1938 purge. On the other hand, mere severity was no solution to the chairman's problem, as Sir John Latham perhaps discovered when he ran Saturday morning's session with the heavy hand of a former chief justice of Australia. When Professor Talmon of Jerusalem, a fiery and intellectually vigorous speaker, took several minutes overtime to rein in the plunging steeds of his rhetoric, Sir John, whose hand had been hovering over the bell but had been restrained each time from a final, decisive clang by a new upsurge of the speaker's ideas, read a stern lecture to the assembly, seasoned with the usual (and, in itself, reasonable) plea that only by strict rationing would there be time for all to be heard. Almost at once, however, Ernst Halperin (Switzerland), also brimming over with interesting ideas, repeated the offence. This time the chairman gonged him down ruthlessly, and the speaker desisted with a shrug as eloquent as anything he had said; the audience showed its sympathy by sustained applause.

ONE thing that made listening to many of the speeches or reading many of the papers difficult was, not to put too fine a point on it, a disinclination of their authors to avoid the obvious. Granted that Freedom is a theme with a peculiar affinity for clichés, still it does seem we were treated to an excessive number. "The content of freedom must change with the changing conditions of time and place," we were told. Other unexceptionable propositions were also advanced: "Freedom is not an absolute; it has its degrees; there can be more or less of it." "Freedom will either be social or it will not be social." "Cultural freedom can only exist if intellectual life is guided by an effort at critical and objective thinking." One's mind slides off the track, into reverie, when confronted with such formulations. There were also presented, on other topics, a rich variety of the genus cliché. There was The Cliché Journalistic: "throw out the baby with the dirty bath water," "Japan is at the crossroads," the complex challenge of our times," "the fires of nationalism . . . the frontiers of freedom," "The world has shrunk; we are ready for a human community; no man is an island." The Cliché Academic: "We be-

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lieve that we have said enough to be able to propose the following working hypothesis: economic structures and political structures are mutually conditioned in their forms and functioning. The two are correlated and interdependent." Or: "The appraisal of the political and economic trends in the world depends on the interpretation of the recent evolution of modern countries." The Cliché Cautious: "I think it is a fact that, when we examine the problem of freedom, we find that our century is subject to conditions differing from the last century." The Cliché Heuristic: "There seems to be no doubt that within a number of Western democracies inequality has greatly diminished. But we should beware of complacency. I believe that positive action is still necessary to reduce social and economic injustice." The Cliché Uh-Huh: "Not all societies that seem free are as free as they seem." Or: "It is clear that the effectiveness of such means for the preservation of liberty is bound to be realised only in the long run, and that success is necessarily uncertain in every case." The Cliché Historical: "The power of the State has steadily increased during the past eight or nine centuries." The Cliché Truistic, or The Circular Cliché: "You cannot suppress a determined rebellion without sharply curtailing freedom." Or: "I think freedom is Man's liberty not to find any inordinate obstacles to his aspirations." The Cliché Elaborate: "If we were to compare the democratic world with the Communist, we might say that the Communist world observes a very specific system in determining all kinds of relations, a system intended to serve its overall plan of development which the Communist world has evolved for, and is implementing in, wide spheres of influence." And, finally, The Cliché Dubious: "Freedom is indivisible." In a sense, all the above belong in this last category, the trouble with clichés being, apart from their tendency to derail the train of thought, that when examined closely it is hard to say whether they are self-obvious or obviously untrue. Or, perhaps most likely, both.

How successful was the Milan Conference? To answer this, we must first answer another question: Why was it held? Passing over such cynical answers as that a body like the Congress for Cultural Freedom must hold a conference every now and then to show the world, and its own backers, that it is still alive and kicking, I can think of three objectives: (a) to stimulate the writing of a number of papers on themes the organisers think should be considered; (b) to bring together people who will get something out of meeting each other; (c) to enable the participants to discuss their ideas face to face. This last is obviously the most important purpose, since (a) could be better achieved by a special issue of a magazine or a collective book, and (b) by a purely social gathering.

On scores (a) and (b) the Conference seemed to me a qualified success. The qualifications as to (a) are that, while a number of good papers were produced—I would personally signal out those of Hannah Arendt, Raymond Aron, Daniel Bell, Colin Clark, Eric DaCosta, Bertrand de Jouvenel, Ely Devons, Michael Freund, Stuart Hampshire, Arthur Lewis, Seymour Lipset, Czeslaw Milosz, Tomoo Otaka, W. S. Woytinsky, and Peter Wiles—far too many pedestrian and/or perfunctory papers were also produced. The selection of paper-writers, in short, might have been more discriminating. The qualification as to (b) is that informal social contact was not easy. The delegates were scattered among a half-dozen hotels lost in a big city; there was no lounge or bar in the building where one could sit down and chat. I was also a little disturbed by the luxury atmosphere—*luxe* hotels, meal tickets to expensive restaurants—whether because of latent puritanism, vestigial socialism, or simply not being accustomed to the life of Reilly. I'm told that (a) there are good technical reasons for this, and (b) it's nothing peculiar to the Congress but simply the normal way such conferences are held in Europe. Okay—but it *did* bother me, and others.

But the main defect of the Conference, of course, was its almost complete failure as (c), a medium for the exchange of ideas. This was chiefly due, as I have said, to the fact that all the meetings were held *en masse*, with 150 or so delegates frustrating all attempts at dialogue through their sheer numbers. The form was that of a parliament or a party congress, with everybody democratically being given his "say" of from two to five minutes. But while this form is a necessary evil for a large body which votes, decides things—from whose talk some action

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follows, in short—it was inappropriate for a gathering whose only function was to discuss. For, in addition to the impossibility of dialogue, it tended to level down; everybody had equal rights, but, alas, some have more to contribute than others; in a small round table, this would be resolved naturally, by those with more passion or more content simply talking more; but here it was levelling with a vengeance. (One could but smile ironically at a remark in Mr. Kennan's earnest and moving final speech: "We must be concerned to guard and preserve whatever we can of variety and plurality in the make-up of society. All that equalises, all that levels, all that standardises is the enemy of freedom." *De te fabula narratur.*) And even given the *en masse* form of the Conference, it could have been much better arranged; there were too many papers at each session, and they were not always grouped together sensibly; thus in Wednesday afternoon's session, Theodor Litt presented an abstract philosophical discussion of "Reason, Tradition, and Freedom," Hannah Arendt and Merle Fainsod papers on totalitarianism in general, Daniel Bell a paper on mass culture in America, and Tomoo Otaka a historical account of "Authoritarianism in Japan." For all the above reasons, plus the disjunction of the speaker from his listeners because of the need for earphones, there was a great amount of restless moving about during the sessions, which was most distracting and which evidenced a certain lack of interest.

THERE were, finally, two special problems which the organisers of the Conference failed to meet. The lesser was the fact that "Freedom" is an extremely vague idea, and hence for a conference on it to be fruitful, it must either be somewhat delimited (as it was in the, I understand, more successful earlier conference in Hamburg on Science and Freedom) or else there must be some dramatic current issue (as was the case in the Congress's first conference, in Berlin, at the hottest point of the cold war). Neither of these obtained in Milan, where agreement was general, vague, and tepid. There was, indeed, a chance to both define and dramatise the discussion, and one that might have yielded exciting and important results—to have taken advantage of the current rifts in the Iron Curtain and invited Soviet intellectuals and also fellow-travellers like Sartre, with the aim of confronting squarely the Western and the Soviet concepts of cultural freedom—but this was not seized. (A Soviet delegation was present at the historians' meeting in Rome about the same time, and, I understand, the difference in their approach and that of the Western delegates was both fascinating and instructive.) The major problem (and opportunity!) which the Conference fumbled was the presence of a sizeable contingent from the underdeveloped countries of the Near and Far East and Africa. The difference between the Western delegates and those of Asia was striking, but could have been foreseen: the latter were obviously not interested in such refinements of Western academic culture as papers like those of Bell, Lipset, Hampshire, and Arendt presented — *their* sophistication is of a very different order, not involving sociological surveys, statistics, economics, or the Western philosophical tradition—but were, for the most part, intent on the answer to the question which Akintola posed, white teeth flashing: "We want to know precisely what Western democracy stands for? Have you got a minimum code of conduct in the West?" (Reasonable enough questions in the light of current happenings in South Africa, Morocco, and Algeria.) In a word, the Western delegates came to Milan to discuss freedom as an abstract philosophical principle, or as a problem in sociology, political theory, other academic disciplines, or as an aspect of European and Anglo-American history and culture; while the Asian delegates came to find out what "freedom" really means to people with white skins—and to present to these cultural representatives of their present or former masters a list of complaints and grievances. It may be that the off-floor contacts between the East and West were more rewarding than the actual sessions —or, of course, that I am a poor observer. In any case, I suggest that if the Conference had been designed with more thought about the problems and the opportunities offered by such a large number of well-qualified delegates from Africa and the Near and Far East, it would have taken a very different, and, I think, more interesting, form.

As it was—no miracle in Milan.

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Discussion

"Statistical Wiles"

MR. WILES, in his polemic against me in the November issue, very chivalrously sets out to defend the big American research institutes which are working on Russian economics. It is their work which I am criticising, not his. My phrase "Russian experts" was not intended to cover Mr. Wiles. I do him the credit of regarding him as an intelligent amateur in this field, whose main interests are elsewhere, and for that reason I attach great importance to the results which he himself has obtained, particularly on retail prices and on housing.

I am accusing most of the Americans working in this field, not so much of bias as of timidity, of failure to tackle some of the most essential questions, and of exceptional amounts of labour and money wasted on comparative trivialities. Their results, in relation to the amount which has been spent on their work, have been very disappointing.*

Mr. Wiles is quite right in pointing out that the *Bulletin of Soviet Economic Development* issued in the name of Birmingham University is highly biassed.

In reply to my criticism, Mr. Wiles draws attention to recent work on wages, cost of living, real wages, and comparisons between Russia and other countries. There is some work of his own, to which he is too modest to draw adequate attention, and also some useful work published in France. I have found this work not only useful, but virtually indispensable, for estimating present levels of productivity in the Soviet Union.

If more attention were paid to Mr. Wiles's final article*—if, in fact, its conclusions could be widely distributed round the world, we should all be much wiser, and many of the "widespread myths" about the Soviet Union which have circulated round the world would be scotched. Taking as 100 the level of real wages as it was in 1928 (we know this to have been somewhat, but not very much, above the 1913 level of real wages) we find that by 1937 real wages had fallen to 61, by 1940 to less than 50. It is claimed that there has been a rapid rise of real wages during recent years, and so there should have been, considering the low level to which they had fallen. In 1947 the figure stood at only 22½ on the 1928 base. The latest available figure for 1953 still only stands at 85, and the rate of increase is now slowing down. The general conclusion is that the level of real wages of the Russian worker is now, after forty years, only slightly higher than it was in 1913. He has had, it appears, some reduction in working hours. But so has had the worker in every other country—and a substantial increase in real wages, too: in countries like the United States, Australia, and Sweden, real wages per week have more than doubled over this period, besides the shortening of hours.

On housing, it seems agreed that conditions are extraordinarily bad, much worse than in pre-revolutionary Russia. It is to Mr. Wiles that we owe the observation, after his visit in 1952, of the curious fact that a large proportion of all

* Incidentally, it seems strange that Dr. Jasny, clearly one of the world's best experts on Soviet statistics, and an American citizen, is apparently not able to participate in any of these big American research projects, but has to work single-handed.

* *Bulletin of the Oxford Institute of Statistics*, November–December 1954.

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the new houses now going up on the outskirts of Russian cities seem to be built by individual enterprise. Marxian theory appears to allow that it is all right for you to build a house with your own hands for your own family to live in, and indeed for the State stores to sell you timber and nails to do it with. You must not, of course, build a house to sell or let to someone else—that would be speculation, and one of the worst crimes against the State. Indeed, it appears that a considerably higher proportion of the building of new houses is due to individual enterprise now in Russia than it is in Britain. What a commentary on the ability of Communism to house the people!

THE figures of food consumption are also fairly clear. Unlike almost everyone else in the world, the Soviet population still appears to be worse fed than it was in 1913. Russian propagandists still sometimes quote figures of grain output in this connection. There are three qualifications to be noticed about these figures. The first is that in 1933 the definition of output was changed. No longer did it refer to what was actually harvested, but to what some biologist estimated was the total weight of ears of grain in the crop in the fields, which of course would be considerably greater than the actual harvest. Secondly, in Russia, as everywhere else, a considerable proportion of the grain crops are used to feed animals. Finally, if we are given, which is not often the case, figures of grain consumption per head of population, the higher they are the worse the standard of diet. One of the elementary rules of economics is that, as other foods become scarcer and dearer, people are compelled to increase their consumption of grain and potatoes. In the wealthier countries, where meat, dairy produce, and fruit are abundant, the per head consumption of grain is low and declining.

Compared with 1913 or 1928, Russian food consumption has risen in respect of sugar and possibly in fats and oils, but is considerably lower for meat, milk, and dairy products—the foods to which most of us attach the principal importance.

There seems to be general agreement among all workers in this field, except the most flagrant partisans, that real wages and consumption in Soviet Russia are at very disappointing levels, and that the rate of increase has not even kept pace with population. It is equally clear that, while the supply of consumption goods and services has been kept very limited, there have been some increases in the work of Government departments providing education, health services, and general administration, considerable increase in the output of capital equipment, and a very great increase in military production. Soviet production, we are told, has greatly increased but it has done little if anything (we find on examination) to improve the standards of consumption for its people. Unless the spokesmen on behalf of the Soviet economy believe that production of capital goods and military equipment is an end in itself (which is probably what some of them do believe) they must defend the use of productive resources for this purpose as temporary. When the needs for capital goods and military equipment have been met, an increasing proportion of their production (such is the implication of their propaganda) will be able to be diverted to consumption.

AT THIS point we must inevitably become involved in some statistical technicalities. Do we want to measure "production" as a whole? Clearly we do. We want to compare the rate of increase of "production" as a whole in the Soviet Union and in other countries, with the implication stated above that if a large part of the present output may be confined to capital goods and military equipment eventually it will be able to produce increased quantities of consumption goods.

It is necessary for us, therefore, to be able to combine figures of the output of consumption goods, output of capital goods, etc. by some system of index numbers, or of adding together values of output when measured at some standard price level, to give a statistically homogeneous figure of "production."

Now in constructing any such index, remember that the results (i.e. the measured rate of growth) depend very much upon the "weights" attached to the different components, or to the standard price level chosen for adding outputs together. Many people are aware now of the ingenious trickery used by Soviet statisticians for many years, whereby they attached very high weights to the output of engineering industries which were rapidly expanding, and very low weights to agriculture, and thus produced index numbers of output which minimised the importance of agriculture's decline.

Now let us examine Mr. Wiles's actual table, firstly, for the rate of growth of product between 1928 and 1937. Mr. Wiles has presumed that the reader will comprehend the orthodox statistical technique of using first base-year weights, then end-year weights, and, if you find they give very different results, taking a geometric mean between them.

It will be seen that Mr. Wiles obtains a very much higher rate of growth by using base-year weights (i.e. weights of 1928) than end-year weights. The 1937 weights, which Mr. Wiles defends in his text, are, I agree, reasonably

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defensible. But the 1928 weights, which are based on the rouble prices then current, greatly overweight the importance of the capital goods industries. They thus overstate the apparent rate of growth. My own preferred device is not to use index numbers, with the persistent weighting problems which they provoke, but instead to revalue, as far as possible, all Russian output and consumption at prices prevailing in the Western world. After all, if we want to compare their output and rate of increase with ours, the simplest and fairest method would appear to be to value their output at our prices.

In estimating the rate of growth between 1928 and 1937 therefore, I would exclude Mr. Wiles's high figure obtained on base-year weights. But I would disagree with some of his component figures, too. He shows consumption rising 15 per cent between 1928 and 1937; whereas, as he has shown elsewhere, real wages fell 39 per cent between these two years, and the number of wage earners in work only increased by about 20 per cent. Nobody can claim that the consumption of the peasants greatly increased. Even if we allow for substantially increased consumption by soldiers and officials, we are still bound to conclude that aggregate consumption in 1937 was well below that of 1928, not 15 per cent higher.

I am prepared to agree with Mr. Wiles's figure of the rate of growth of the capital goods industries (though I am estimating net investment and he is estimating gross), and for public expenditure on health, education, etc. But the economic value of Soviet military expenditure, so far as such a thing can be measured at all, which according to Mr. Wiles rose eight-fold over this period, in my own estimate rose only about five-fold. This increase in military expenditure represents a substantial fraction of the whole estimated increase in Soviet "product."

Altogether, therefore, I estimate increase in Soviet net output between 1928 and 1937 at 33 per cent, as against Mr. Wiles's much higher figures.

In the comparison between 1948 and 1953, based on figures compiled by Mr. Nove, who is known as a careful and extremely well-informed worker, Mr. Wiles finds less difficulty with the weighting problem. The two methods give results which are only eight points apart. He averages them to get an increase of 52 per cent over the five-year period, or a compounded rate of increase of 8·7 per cent per annum.

Though Mr. Wiles's figure may be somewhat overstated, the rate of growth appears to have been high over this period. For some recent years I should be inclined to put the rate as high as 7 per cent per annum. But it seems equally clear that these rates are unlikely to be maintained in the future. They are exceptional rates due to the catching up of arrears, and the restoration of production facilities damaged or disorganised during the war.

Mr. Wiles contends that the wartime damage was made up by 1948, and that everything since then represents what might be called a "sustainable" rate of growth, into the indefinite future. The following objection may seem to be a technicality, but it appears to be important. A country recuperating from a damaging war may expect an abnormally rapid rate of growth, not merely up to the point where it gets back to the precise level of product which it had before the war. It should expect this abnormal rate of growth to persist until it reaches the point where it should have been, if the pre-war trend line of normal economic growth had been maintained. This is not merely an *à priori* proposition; it is based also on the experience of other countries.

MR. WILES states the issue in another way. My comparatively low figure for the increase of product per man hour in 1938 and 1953 is compounded, he says, of a decline in the war years and rapid increases in the two short periods 1938–40 and 1949–53. Agreed. But I still maintain that it was only *because* there had been a decline in the war period (or rather, to be more precise, a failure to make any advance, if we take the war period and immediate post-war period together) that rapid growth was provoked for the years immediately after 1949.

Mr. Wiles draws attention, perhaps rightly, to the extreme devastation in many important areas of the Soviet Union. He points out that there was nothing like this in any other country, except perhaps in Germany; and for that reason contends that it is not fair, yet, to compare Soviet pre-war and post-war productivity as I have done. But this argument works both ways. The greater the wartime devastation, the more we should expect, not merely a rapid rate of growth of post-war productivity, but also, more significantly, the longer we should expect this growth period to last. The Soviet Union and probably Germany are still in the period of abnormally rapid post-war growth, while other countries have completed it.

Turning to such countries, for which we have more precise figures, we can bring the whole argument to a *reductio ad absurdum* by pointing out, for instance, that Italy in 1946 had a real product 46 per cent higher than in the previous year. This rate of increase fell to 24 per cent in the subsequent year, but then remained above 6 per cent for several years, until a normal growth-rate in the neighbourhood of 4 per cent was obtained. Germany, after the currency reform of 1948, showed a growth rate averaging

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15 per cent per annum for three years, and then averaged about 6 per cent per annum for the next three. (In Germany's case, as in Russia's, it is doubtful, however, whether real product per man hour is yet much above pre-war.) Japan's growth-rates in the post-war years follow a somewhat similar course to Germany's.

Now we come finally to what is perhaps the crux of the argument, and is more a question of definition and methods than of statistics. Russia's rate of growth of output since 1928 has only been obtained, I contend, by the rapid diversion to industry of large numbers of the former rural population. Mr. Wiles does not deny this. My contention is that it obviously cannot go on indefinitely, otherwise there will soon be no one left to produce food. Russia is clearly badly enough fed as it is. Once again, Mr. Wiles does not deny this. What he does say is that there are many other countries which could obtain great increases in production if the "surplus" rural population were diverted to industry; but that Soviet Russia in fact is the only country which has built the factories, and done the job, within a comparatively short space of time.

So now we are, in a sense, back where we started, although we have got a number of important statistical facts elucidated in the course of our journey. Other countries, starting at various dates, have also successfully tackled the question of "surplus" rural labour—Japan and Italy are outstanding examples—and their methods have been undoubtedly a great deal more humane than those of the Soviet Union. India is now commencing the process with considerable success, with a steady and sustainable growth-rate of real national product of 4 per cent per annum, and with the minimum of social disturbance. The crucial question, which the general reader rather than the statistician must judge, is whether the gains in output in Russia have been worth the regimentation, suffering, imprisonment, and death inflicted upon the peasant population in the course of "transferring" them.*

COLIN CLARK

Agricultural Economics Research Institute
Oxford

* I must add that it is to Mr. Wiles, more than any other Western statistician, that we owe some estimate of the extent of imprisonment in labour camps which took place during various stages of this process.

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BOOKS

The Family Way

THE owl of Minerva sets forth at dusk, wrote Hegel in what is perhaps the single memorable metaphor in his collected works, meaning by it that the most acute consciousness of a historical situation emerges at the point where that situation is on the verge of dissolution. He would have found, in present-day England, some strong corroborating testimony. There is, for instance, the commotion provoked by Nancy Mitford's essay on the English aristocracy. It is hard to believe that, at a time when the egalitarian principle is so supreme, there are people who are passionately interested in the English dialect that surviving lords and ladies affect. Yet the fact remains that, long before this passion was spent, the available issues of ENCOUNTER were utterly exhausted. Almost simultaneously, there came Henry Fairlie's assault (in the *Spectator*) against "The Establishment." One would have thought—and many insisted on it—that in our day and age this was taking aim at a phantom. But from the huge emotions and outraged denials that he has excited, it is obvious that Mr. Fairlie had hit a live nerve.

The truth is, of course, that the English class system, though it may be down, is not yet out. And this posture offers temptations to the mob of the living that are apparently irresistible. There is, for some, the temptation to kick the prostrate body; for others, to pronounce a flowery valedictory; or even — among certain types of nostalgic masochists—to fling themselves to the ground and expire in grief. Mr. Paul Bloomfield* is primarily a valedictorian, and his occasional gestures in the direction of sorrowful expiration are probably not meant seriously. He has written a book that is at one and the same time extremely interesting and extraordinarily foolish. Interesting, because he has had the good idea of tracing the genealogy of five families—the Villiers, the Cecils, the Barclays, the Wedgwoods, and the Stephens—and of showing how significant a rôle they have played in English life. Foolish, for more than one reason. To begin with, he suffers from incurable *snobisme*. "Nowadays many of our British 'stately homes' are open to the public in summer for a small charge. It is enough to visit them in picture books to be distracted with nostalgia for a happiness most of us never had"—as if happiness were an aristocratic prerogative! Furthermore, Mr. Bloomfield has a vague penchant for eugenics which leads him to suggest that not only are specific talents—musical, mathematical, dramatic—inherited, which of course they are, but that also such larger qualities as leadership, force of character, and sagacity are transmitted through the genes, which of course they are not. (On the other hand, he nowhere mentions Lombroso's argument—to which Galton gave reluctant assent — that there is a statistical correlation between genius and insanity in any family.) It can almost be said of Mr. Bloomfield that he does not see the forest for the family trees.

Nevertheless, as I have said, Mr. Bloomfield's book is extremely interesting. One is intrigued to learn that, of the forty-three Prime Ministers who have held office since Walpole, twelve were descended from Sir George Villiers, a country squire who died in 1606; that this same squire was a common ancestor of Queen Elizabeth II, Winston Churchill, and Bertrand Russell; that "about a third of the members of the Churchill government in office at the time of Queen

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Elizabeth's Coronation were men who are, or who are married to, descendants of Sir George—or who are both, like Sir Anthony Eden and Lord Salisbury." And one is no less intrigued by the unravelling of the genealogical threads that bound together those families which have dominated English culture for almost a century now—the Wedgwoods, the Darwins, the Frys, the Macaulays, the Trevelyans, the Forsters, the Arnolds, the Stephens, the Venns, the Galtons, the Diceys, the Garnetts, the Vaughans, the Symondses, the Bells, the Stracheys, the Huxleys, etc.

WHAT does all this information add up to? Well, it may not add up precisely to an Establishment, but it does make for a state of affairs where the family plays a more significant part than it does in other comparable lands. To be sure, in those ages when population was so considerably smaller than it is now, when the "ruling class" was inevitably "the ruling few," the family was everywhere the main social, economic, and political factor in a nation's life: though every historian of the Italian Renaissance takes this for granted, English historians—enamoured of the larger verities—tended to neglect it, until the Namierian revolution recalled it to their attention. But, in England, the influence of the family has remained more virile than elsewhere. When, some years back, Winston Churchill was given a large sum of money in the form of a public subscription, he promptly put it into a trust for his children; in the United States, or France, or Italy, such an action would have shocked and horrified public opinion, which would have expected the recipient to set up, say, a trust fund for poor scholars, or crippled children, or even homeless cats—to the English, the fact that Sir Winston thought first of his family seemed eminently reasonable and proper.

". . . English society being what it is, no very great merit is required, once you bear a well-known name, to put you into a position where it is easier on the whole to be eminent than obscure," wrote Virginia Woolf in one of her earlier novels. That holds, of course, for other societies as well. One can go further and say it holds for all societies, past, present, and future, for there has been a magic to names ever since Adam first distributed them to the queuing beasts in Paradise. But it holds

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in a special way, and with a special tenacity, in England where the ruling class—when such an identifiable thing existed—was never an Aristocracy of the Blood but rather an Aristocracy of the Name. As Tocqueville pointed out more than a hundred years ago, "The reason why the English middle-class, far from being hostile to the aristocracy, inclined to fraternise with it, was not so much that the aristocracy kept open house, as that its barriers were ill-defined; not so much that entrance into it was easy, as that you never knew when you had got there." The reason for this blurring, he went on to emphasise, was the willingness of the nobility to intermarry—not, it may be added, merely with the wealthy bourgeoisie, but with their housemaids, milkmaids, even their mistresses. As a result, England had for an upper-class a coalition of families, in contrast to the kind of caste that France could show. As a further result, the English "gentleman" managed to muddle through the calamities of the modern era, when the French "*gentilhomme*" lost his head.

However, one cannot put off doomsday for ever, and the time is fast approaching when there will be only one great name and one great family—call it Demos. To an American like myself, this is not likely to appear to be the unmitigated catastrophe it will seem for others. But again, as an American, reared in a profoundly disestablished country, I am perhaps more aware than some of what will be lost in the way of continuity, stability, and graciousness. So to Mr. Fairlie I would say: your Establishment exists all right, and is no fevered figment of the imagination—take pleasure in it while you can, it will not be for long!

Irving Kristol

AT THE HEART OF LAWRENCE

THERE are signs that the reaction against the nineteen-twenties and -thirties is on the wane. The flood tide of ideas and emotions, so carefully dammed up by the liberal conformity of those decades and released with such violence by the impact of the last war, is now beginning to abate. The hysteria of self-recrimination and guilt in which the intelligentsia of the democracies took all the weight of Hitler's crimes upon their own shoulders is calming down. The more absurd anti-democratic and anti-rational trappings that have clothed post-war thought are ceasing to be modish. Having tried to expiate our failures by blaming our liberal nannies and governesses and finding that it doesn't work, we are beginning to remember how wise and kind was so much of what we heard in the nursery. We may yet see Mr. Muggeridge, for example, finding a good word for the virtues of Lord Beveridge or Sidney Webb. Yet the rosy glow which once hung over the liberal decades can never now be restored; there will always be about them a flush of self-satisfaction, falseness, and highminded evasion. For all its accent on tolerance, reason, and broadmindedness, the liberal intelligentsia demanded conformity to a view of life that left out half the truth. It was their punishment that this failure should have been seen and set down by the greatest novelist of their time—D. H. Lawrence. It is only fitting that Dr. Leavis, the great literary critic for whom the liberal culture could find no place, should have written the first really understanding book on Lawrence's novels.*

That this new work is the study that any real student of Lawrence's novels has been waiting for is immediately apparent from its emphasis. Dr. Leavis goes straight to the heart of the matter by centring his book on *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, for they are the kernel of Lawrence's tough genius; even more striking is his unconventional but, in my opinion, absolutely just estimation that *Women in Love* is the greater novel of the two. Before *The Rainbow*, Lawrence was fighting to express his extraordinary view of the world through the dead, sodden medium of the novel as Arnold Bennett or John Galsworthy fashioned it. Even in a form so

* *D. H. Lawrence*. By F. R. LEAVIS. Chatto and Windus. 21s.

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constricting and uncongenial, Lawrence, of course, could beat them at their own game, as *Sons and Lovers* or even the less satisfactory *White Peacock* show. Early patrons like Edward Garnett, of course, found Lawrence's genius more congenial in this sort of strait-jacket; and many conventional critics today who are frightened by the force of Lawrence's genius echo the parrot cry that "*Sons and Lovers* is his best book." Dr. Leavis rightly does not bother with this view nor with the even more insulting suggestion that Lawrence's novels are only valuable for their passages of lyrical description—a view stemming from that particularly repulsive misconception that works of art need not be treated as total forms. It was not long, however, before Lawrence, like Virginia Woolf, was finding the bonds of the old form unbearable. It is interesting here, I think, to contrast their paths of emancipation—a contrast which Dr. Leavis's undue contempt for Mrs. Woolf's work does not allow him to make. The contrast, nevertheless, reveals so beautifully Lawrence's superiority.

THE escape to *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, however much one may admire these works—and unlike Dr. Leavis I do respect them—is an escape into formlessness and into a narrowing vision. *Women in Love*, on the other hand, has a form as strict as some court dance, yet the formal measures that his quartet of characters, the Brangwen girls, Birkin, and Crich, are made to dance express a complete moral truth that is a final criticism of modern Western society. Dr. Leavis's analysis of this book is quite masterly, but even so he cannot fully convey the extraordinary satisfaction of so vast a content in so tight a form. He does, however, stimulate the desire to read Lawrence's masterpiece, which is the most valuable service he can perform. The truth is that Mrs. Woolf turned in despair from *Night and Day* to work out a new and artificial form; Lawrence, with his usual tenacity, blasted his way through the old form until he had created a novel peculiar to his own needs. *The Rainbow*, fine though much of it is, flashes and bursts its brilliance in every direction and, as Dr. Leavis points out, ends nowhere in a shower of falling lights. It is, in fact, the blast by which he forced his way through to the form he needed.

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Women in Love, however, has all that Lawrence could give and he never quite gave it in so satisfactory a form again. *Aaron's Rod* makes the same masterly overall survey of contemporary society; it shines with that same angry-compassionate satire of contemporary types that we find in *Women in Love*. One of Dr. Leavis's best points is to blow sky-high the ridiculous idea that Lawrence had no eye for character, or ear for dialogue. Nevertheless, *Aaron's Rod* is less successful in its central theme. I believe that this is for an essential reason which Dr. Leavis does not make quite clear. In *Aaron's Rod*, Lawrence himself is only represented by the man Lilly, in *Women in Love* he is represented by Ursula Brangwen and Birkin—a man and a woman. Lawrence, of necessity, needed both sexes for personal expression.

It is here, I fear, that Dr. Leavis's rugged Puritanism will not let him do justice to Lawrence. He can share Lawrence's contempt for contemporary democracy, for easy promiscuity, for false humility and bogus Christ-love, but he accepts Lawrence's attempt to put across his views of sexual love as normal too easily because he wishes to see Lawrence as the arbiter of the normative truth about sex. It is quite right, of course, to dismiss with contempt Middleton Murry's attempt to represent Lawrence's art as a psycho-pathological document, but it is impossible to disregard the extraordinary feminine sexual side of Lawrence which he so desperately sought to turn into non-sexual channels of *Bruderschaft* and so on. I would simply here ask Dr. Leavis to note the many descriptions of male physique in *Women in Love*, the total absence of descriptions of the bodies of Ursula and Gudrun. Lawrence's genius is too great to need fitting into conventional patterns; Dr. Leavis's sympathy for that genius too complete to be disfigured by any such Puritan blinkers.

Angus Wilson

RELIGION IN THE MELTING POT

WHAT does religion amount to in the United States? Mr. Herberg,* whose book is subtitled "An essay in American religious sociology," gives some fascinating answers. His first point is an apparent contradiction: namely, that present-day Americans "exhibit every sign of a widespread religious revival," yet also "think, feel, and act in terms quite obviously secularist." Church membership has increased proportionally much more than the national increase in population. Many new churches and synagogues, often very expensive structures, have been built since the war. Religion has become universally "respectable," and avowed atheism or agnosticism has almost disappeared. As Mr. Herberg notes, eighty years ago Robert G. Ingersoll managed to be a prominent Republican as well as a prominent free-thinker: nowadays no politician would risk his neck by publicly doubting the existence of God. Indeed, there has been a move to "put God into the Constitution" (where He is not mentioned); and, unlike previous incumbents, President Eisenhower has prefaced his cabinet meetings with a moment of silent prayer. About ten million copies of the Bible are distributed annually in the United States. The two books that have dominated the non-fiction best-seller lists during the Eisenhower administration have been the Rev. Norman Vincent Peale's *Power of Positive Thinking*, and *A Man Called Peter*, which is a biography of a former chaplain of Congress written by his widow.

But are these evidences of religious zeal, or merely of religiosity? Mr. Herberg thinks the latter. In a recent poll, over four out of five adult Americans believed the Bible to be the "revealed word of God," rather than simply "a great piece of literature." Yet over half of these same people were unable to name any of the first four books of the New Testament. Americans seem to believe chiefly

* *Protestant–Catholic–Jew*. By WILL HERBERG. Doubleday (New York). $4.00.

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in the need to believe. They seek an indistinct consolation and uplift, of the sort proffered by Mr. Peale (with his exhortation to "PRAYERISE—PICTURISE—ACTUALISE"), not the sterner support of any more strenuous orthodoxy. To a depressing extent, Mr. Herberg feels, his countrymen have equated religion with "Americanism," as one among the snug ingredients in the American Way of Life.

His other main point, which he sees as at least a partial explanation of the current "paradox," concerns the tripartite, separate-but-equal development of American religion. Even as lately as the 1920's, he holds, Protestantism was unofficially the official religion of the United States. Certainly the defeat of Al Smith in the presidential election of 1928 had something, though not everything, to do with the fact that he was a Catholic. (So far, Smith has been the only non-Protestant presidential candidate adopted by either of the major political parties.) But today, Mr. Herberg contends, Protestantism no longer holds this favoured position. There is still a strong current of anti-Catholicism. Peter Viereck has remarked that "anti-Catholicism is the anti-Semitism of the intellectual"; and the books of Paul Blanshard (*American Freedom and Catholic Power* and others) are bitterly hostile to the Roman Church. There is, too, plenty of anti-Semitism in America, on all levels. But the notion that Catholicism or Judaism were in themselves "un-American" has, Mr. Herberg maintains, almost vanished.

Protestantism has become a somewhat generalised amalgam, collectively powerful and numerous but lacking in its old fervours. Its many denominations are not always on friendly terms with one another, yet are less and less sharply differentiated. Movement from one to another of them is common, and painless (Mr. Herberg might have quoted the statement of Adlai Stevenson, in 1952, that "If it's true that politics is the art of compromise, I've had a good start; my mother was a Republican and a Unitarian, my father was a Democrat and a Presbyterian. I ended up in his party and her church").

As for Catholicism, it has come to terms with American life. This was the price of its survival. In paying the price, it has been able to win acceptance and also remain a separate entity. If there are relatively few conversions to Catholicism in America, there are relatively few apostasies either. Intermarriage takes place more and more often between different *ethnic* groups—say, between Irish and Italian—but even less often than previously between different *religious* groups. The same is true of Judaism: a whole cluster of once ill-assorted Jewish groups has now come together within the self-contained framework of American Judaism.

In other words, American religion has, institutionally, had an extremely important sociological function. Many second-generation immigrants, anxious to identify themselves fully with their new country, turned deliberately away from their ethnic and religious affiliations. "Americanisation" seemed likely to lead them to abandon all such baggage. The melting-pot, conceivably, would melt them all into one quasi-Protestant or unchurched mass. In Israel Zangwill's famous play *The Melting Pot* (1908), which popularised the phrase, the Jewish hero affirms his vision of America by marrying a Gentile girl. Distinctions of race and creed, the play implies, will be obliterated in America. But in practice the melting-pot was not so efficient. With the third generation came the desire for self-definition within the main pattern of Americanism. Hence the continuing sociological, as distinct from purely religious, appeal of Catholicism or Judaism. Hence in large part the present secularist tinge of American religion.

THIS is Mr. Herberg's thesis. It is a plausible, well-sustained, and on the whole—I think—correct one. I do not feel that he stresses quite enough the strength of the American religious impulse as a historical force, nor the weakness and even silliness of the melting-pot theory. Its advocates, understandably angry with "nativist" arguments that immigration should be restricted, pushed their own case too far, postulating an impossibly complete "Americanisation." Their ideal American would have been a magnanimous blank. Among other factors, they did not reckon with the tenacity of the Catholic and Jewish faiths, nor with the protective comfort that these could provide; nor, indeed, with the defensive, unwelcoming suspicion of the Protestant churches.

I feel also that Mr. Herberg, like Oscar Handlin, from whom he draws a good deal

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of his material, is apt to generalise too roundly from Jewish experience, and accordingly to explain too much in terms of immigrant traumas. As a result he takes little account of the weakening of religious faith discernible everywhere in the Western world in the late 19th century. If America had its Ingersoll, England had its Charles Bradlaugh; and Ingersoll, after all, was not a recent immigrant but came of old American stock. There was undoubtedly a special immigrant traumas. As a result he takes little though not permanent growth of free thought.

These are only quibbles. If another small one may be added, I would have liked a little more comment on the two "original" American religions, Mormonism and Christian Science. Mr. Herberg rightly says that these show the characteristic tendency of American sects to evolve into respectable "Americanised" denominations. Are they, though, to be classified as Protestant? And in any case, is not Protestantism perhaps so large a classification as to be almost meaningless? If so, is it not still rather more of a preferred American status than Mr. Herberg seems to suggest? He does speak of its unchallenged hold over rural areas, where forty per cent of Americans still live. Since such areas are politically over-represented, in comparison with urban areas, may they not long continue to favour the Protestant portion of Mr. Herberg's "triple melting-pot"? Is there any likelihood within our lifetimes that a Catholic or a Jew will become President?

THE picture that Mr. Herberg draws of current American religious observance could be considered a gloomy one. He could have darkened the picture further by mentioning the mock-religious absurdities of American funeral rituals as the morticians fashion them. But Mr. Herberg does not seem unduly disheartened, and I think he is right. For one thing, the religiosity that he condemns has been with us for a long time. We should recall that thirty years back Americans (and Englishmen too) were absorbing edition after edition of Bruce Barton's classic of vulgarity, *The Man Nobody Knows*, in which Christ was presented as "the outdoor man" ("His muscles were so strong that when he drove the money-changers out, nobody dared to oppose him!"),

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"the most popular dinner guest in Jerusalem," and "the founder of modern business" ("He picked up twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organisation that conquered the world").

In some ways the attitudes of 1955 are better, or at least a little less crass. There is more serious self-criticism among churchmen. Blandness begins to produce its antidote. The Catholic Church, for example, has started to engender the intelligentsia that it has so conspicuously lacked in America. American intellectuals are not reading Norman Vincent Peale, nor crowding the Sunday morning pews. But they are more sympathetic to the orthodox religious view of human nature and human purpose—current literary criticism, for instance, is crammed with references to original sin—and their perpetual dissent from popular American behaviour has, by an interesting reversal, now taken on a novel air of sobriety and responsibility. A surprising number of them sound oddly like Reinhold Niebuhr. One or two even recall Cotton Mather.

At the end, we come back to the old, old American story. Here is a country in which the best and the worst are inextricably tangled. In the effort to moderate the atrocious difficulties of this heterogeneous land, toleration, tact, and decency are always reaching a glut of mealy-mouthedness and vague rah-rah. Faith degenerates into religiosity, hope into the booster spirit, charity into the greatest of these three, which is fund-raising. Yet the alternative is cruel anarchy. True religion is parodied; but the parody only disguises, it does not destroy. All this Mr. Herberg recognises and expresses with admirable good humour—and with, now and then, a wholesome burst of irritation.

Marcus Cunliffe

A LEFT MOMENT

THE inter-war years are conveniently divided: the twenties had one character, the thirties another, the economic crisis in the middle acting as a watershed. That crude generalisation is true enough to be useful. Before the great American crash there was a widespread faith, which no amount of irreverence for the past could quite smother, in the infinite capacity and the certain triumph, throughout the world, of Western industrial civilisation. It was not till after the deluge that this Victorian confidence decayed. Thereon a sense of doom became more fashionable, and it was widely held to be the duty of all to search for remedies with which not only to cure the ills of society, but to transform the thing. The mood of the typical thinker in the twenties had been uneasily optimistic; in the thirties it was often abandoned to convictions of guilt. People in the twenties were apt to leave politics to politicians, but in the thirties they were more likely to insist that every man should be his own political philosopher. Those who grew up into the inter-war world usually joined one decade or the other in spirit, and it was rare to join both. Between the people of the twenties and the people of the thirties the antagonism between generations was, and often remains, somewhat stronger than is usual. Mr. Lehmann was a prominent member of the thirties, and in *The Whispering Gallery** he brings those years back to us.

The book is written with extreme care and contains a remarkably well-considered account of what it is to be born into a well-to-do family with distinguished intellectual attainments, to grow up in the company of talented sisters, to go to Eton, to set up as a young literary man, and, lastly, how it was to live through the thirties. The fault of the earlier part of the book is a lack of discrimination in the selection of detail, and some readers are likely to be fatigued by the enormous amount which the author confides in them. Later on, however, when the story moves into fields of general concern, this very

* *The Whispering Gallery*. By JOHN LEHMANN. Longmans. 21s.

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fault is turned to good use, and in the detailed record and analysis of the literary advance guard of the thirties, Mr. Lehmann has contributed something to historical studies which will certainly be of permanent value. Before reaching this part of the chronicle, which makes the book important, the most interesting thing is the account of schooldays.

For anyone familiar with the Etonian chapter which Mr. Cyril Connolly perplexingly included in his interesting book of criticism, *Enemies of Promise*, Mr. Lehmann's picture of the same place and time, and many of the same personalities, can present an intriguing contrast. In that Eton of the early twenties, Mr. Connolly sought and found, with difficulty and ultimate dissatisfaction, a hedonist freedom in which his young mind and spirit could grow to the height of their promise. Mr. Lehmann, starting a few years later, found himself "battling prematurely with the eternal problem of order and repression in society." The battle was to persist in his life, even as the Connollyan temperament was not to undergo a radical change. In later years Mr. Connolly acquired his first fame in the thirties as a distinguished representative of an experimenting but always hedonist spirit which was more typical of pre-1930 years, while Mr. Lehmann became one of the leading men of that prodigious leftward swing of the intelligentsia which (is it not too much to say) has had a lasting effect on our history.

THE British advance guard in the thirties imitated the custom of foreign intelligentsias and grouped themselves. The Left Book Club and *New Writing* gave them organisation. John Lehmann, trained by Leonard and Virginia Woolf in publishing, was the founder and editor of *New Writing*, one of the most influential publications with a small circulation to exist in modern times. He was sufficiently twentyish to pursue a policy of art for art's sake in the choice of material, and he asserted that he would take any material of any political colour except those of fascism and (as he expressed it in a sentence of unfortunate vagueness) of "reaction." But in the age of Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain at home, and of the new barbarism abroad, the fire of the spirit could rarely glow on the right, and found

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continual inspiration to keep it ablaze on the embattled left. Mr. Lehmann himself drifted further leftwards and Russiawards with every year, and *New Writing*, whatever its æsthetics, by the force of circumstances as much as by the force of will, became a potent instrument for conferring that prestige on the left wing which the latter came to enjoy plentifully in the forties.

"*Les hommes de Trente-Cinq*," as they might have been called in France, accepted the enormous responsibility of causing a revolution (which mercifully did not happen), and so they invite judgment. The trouble with this particular band was that despite the considerable political influence which it came to wield, it was without much political talent or acumen. The idea of politics as the art of the possible was as unfamiliar to its members as to the nihilists of Tsarist Russia. They were so defective in a sense of history that they took many discredited political notions on trust. For example, when they were told that wars are engineered by bankers and steel magnates in dark and monstrous council, they believed this enjoyably anti-capitalist story. When they were told the same story about Jews, they recognised the malign nonsense of fascist propaganda, without ever being aware, it seems, that the two ideas, the accepted and the rejected, were not only similar but were in fact twin brethren. Political anti-Semitism and financial-plot-mania are both descended from the anti-Jacobin propaganda which, in the hands of Abbé Barruel a hundred and fifty years ago, first portrayed history as the consequence of vast secret conspiracies. That famous forgery "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" is a clever adaptation of Barruel's absurdities on the subject of freemasonry. Why did the young men of the Left Book Club never trouble to find out about such things? The truth is part of an old story. In politics the advance guard was far from being the rational movement it claimed to be, but was much more an emotional compensation-shop, very tempting to a younger generation in those days of mounting danger abroad and persistent and porcine somnolence in British public life. As with most literary adventurings into politics, a thing more in the French tradition than our own, this one did little good and some harm. It failed in its principal duty of educating the left and preferred to obtain excitement from current Marxist nonsense. It added grievously to the political muddle of a muddle-headed time.

MR. LEHMANN entirely repudiates his former faith in Russian Marxism, though he does not leave it clear whether he recognises the culpable folly of the Communist outing. He says that "it wasn't particularly easy to see" the bad side of the Russian régime "in the conditions of the thirties." Why not? There were plenty of people in Moscow and Leningrad to tell anyone who wanted to know. Among British people there were Sir Readar Bullard, Mr. Chollerton, and Lady Muriel Paget, three very fair, very experienced, and very gifted observers. In my own case, I learned most about Russia, about the undoubted virtues of the régime and also its sinister side, from a remarkable woman who was detailed to show me round Leningrad, and to report on me, and anyone else whom she guided (so she told me), to the Secret Police. She was a very intelligent and utterly delightful being, and like so many Russians quite incapable of

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the odious arts of discretion and "security." She was not an anti-Communist, but through sheer honesty of mind she would not have me in doubt as to the continual deportations and other atrocities which were going on in those relatively easy-going times. She regarded it as important that the truth should be known to the world at large and not smothered up for the sake of a party line, for like many Russians she was an extreme idealist. There were, and I expect are, hundreds like her. There was really no difficulty at all in finding out the rough truth about the régime, unless you stopped, or "conditioned," your eyes and ears.

But if Mr. Lehmann is too indulgent to thirtyish offences against common sense, he makes up for this in his excellent attempt to recapture the feelings which led him and his friends the way they went. He saw, as few have done, how poverty can kill talent, and in his search for proletarian literature he came to know what the lot of the poor really is. He dedicated himself to the righting of their miseries. Following the strong internationalism of the left in those days, he studied proletarian life outside his country. The finest thing in the book is the description of Vienna in the last days of the first Austrian Republic and during the German invasion. He tells of the day when Vienna received as her conqueror the worst man produced by the ramshackle empire. His description is deeply moving, irresistibly exciting, and informed by the sympathy of a generous mind.

Christopher Sykes

LIONS OR DODOS?

As there are Queensberry rules to keep boxing clean, so no doubt there are Bloomsbury rules to keep reviewing clean, and, in referring to another reviewer's notice of Mr. David Garnett's *The Flowers of the Forest*,* I am breaking one of them. However, as that notice announces that the Bloomsbury outlook has been "deader than the dodo these last fifteen years at least," I suppose that I need feel the less compunction. This reviewer goes on to say, for almost a column in one of our three possible Sunday papers (the other is the *News of the World*), that Bloomsbury "took the fringes of life for its centre" and that "too close for sympathy, too far for understanding, it is inevitable that we, at this particular distance, should judge too harshly their dazzling but brittle achievements." To which I can only reply that in "we" this reviewer has got hold of the wrong pronoun.

The Flowers of the Forest is the second instalment of Mr. Garnett's autobiography (*The Golden Echo*); and at the same time he has brought out a new novel, *Aspects of Love*.* It is interesting to turn to these in search of the "fringes of life" which poor deluded Bloomsbury "took for its centre." *The Flowers of the Forest* covers the period 1914–23, and much the greater bulk of it is devoted to the activities of Bloomsbury during the First World War. The author, like Lytton Strachey, was a non-combatant, and we hear how he helped to rebuild a shattered French village, or to bring in a Sussex harvest. But the war itself is seldom more than a background to the delicately articulated system of loyalties and enthusiasms which made Bloomsbury what it was. Mr. Garnett's pictures of his contemporaries, written in his unfailingly pure and limpid prose, are everywhere memorable; but the character to emerge with the greatest clarity and charm is (as it must be in every autobiography worth its salt) his own. I admire particularly his treatment of his love affairs—that rock on which almost every autobiographer founders, veered either by Bowdlerisation or by barroom boasting. Mr. Garnett keeps a very steady head and a very steady hand. He

* *The Flowers of the Forest*. By David Garnett. Chatto and Windus. 21s.

* *Aspects of Love*. By David Garnett. Chatto and Windus. 8s. 6d.

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explains that he has never been a *rake* but always a *libertine*; and adds:

> I have never had reason to share Donne's regret:
>
> "Ah cannot we
> As well as cocks and lions jocund be
> After such pleasures?"
>
> For it is at those moments that I have most felt my kinship with the lion and have least felt either a sense of sin, or shame.

This, to a generation with Grundy at one ear-hole and Freud at the other, is the sort of thing that needs saying—and needs saying *quietly*, for a writer like D. H. Lawrence seems to me what Lewis Carroll would have termed a mere Frundy in this matter. All the more pity then, that the Sunday reviewer should postulate Mr. Garnett's kinship, not with the lion, but the dodo.

Aspects of Love is compounded out of some of the best-worn romantic clichés—Love in the empty Pyrenean villa, the studio on the Isle St. Louis, the vineyard in the Rabelais country, the farouche Italian Countess. The aspects of love discussed are all, designedly or not, of love between persons of very different ages—the student and the actress, the actress and the elderly poet-baronet, the Lieutenant-Colonel and the schoolgirl of thirteen. This doesn't sound a very good book, does it? But in point of fact, despite its artificialities and literary *données*, it is so tightly written and tautly constructed, with that classic objectivity that brings out implications as clear water the colours of stones, that it seems to me a very good book indeed, and its stock characters and situations to clarify rather than obscure the underlying realities with which every worth-while novelist is concerned. For it is these realities which the Sunday reviewer stigmatises as "the fringes of life": friendship, loyalty, love, art, style, and marginal matters like that; birth, copulation, death, and peripheral flim-flam of that sort.

M. FRANÇOIS MAURIAC, one may assume, feels no kinship with the lion: a world without sin and shame would not (if I may so phrase it) suit his book at all. *The Lamb** has an epigraph from that hot-house mystico-masochist Simone Weil that sufficiently indicates its moral climate: "The infinitely tender love which has extended to me the gift of unhappiness." The hero, Xavier Dartigelongue, a young man about to enter the Seminary, has a talent for self-immolation which finally finds expression in his apparently pointless suicide on a borrowed bicycle. This death by some celestial, spiritual, unexplained, and inexplicable chemistry restores the lost sexual potency of Xavier's antagonist, a wicked blasphemer who with proper gratitude then becomes an ex-blasphemer. The *motif* ideas of the book are, first, that there is no such thing as a chance encounter, that every new acquaintance has been purposefully placed in one's way at the critical moment by a personal, and personally interfering, God; second, that pain is an absolute good in itself—

> He set the glory of this ordeal [walking barefoot over pine-cones, when he might just as well have had his shoes on] among those many glories which grace the development and the free exercise of a delicate conscience. He felt the weight of a tear, of a drop of sweat or blood, as something among those many torments caused not only by man's inhumanity to man, for our life, and the virtues of our life, can grow only if borne up and supported on the inexhaustible flood of agony.

If I say that the first of these ideas appears to me puerile, and the second damnable, it will (I suppose) be objected by M. Mauriac's many and vociferous supporters that I simply have not "seen" the book. I, of course, am under the impression that, so far from not "seeing" it, I have seen right through it. The plot of *The Lamb* is brilliant on the surface, but seems to me to crumble to pieces on any close examination. I am not impressed by the guilty turgidity of the style, of which the quoted extract is sufficient example; nor by the conscientious ugliness ("He noticed that she [the 'heroine'] had a blackhead on one nostril, a little wrinkle at the corner of her mouth, and the red mark of a former boil on her thick neck"). Nor does M. Mauriac seem to realise that outside his conservatory-world of pious men and blasphemers (who are, of course, just pious men turned inside out), there are any number of good and intelligent people who are profoundly uninterested in the whole Catholic rumpus except in so far as they would be quite glad if it just quietly died down.

**The Lamb*. By FRANÇOIS MAURIAC. Translated by GERARD HOPKINS. Eyre and Spottiswoode. 12s. 6d.

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*Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle** is the third novel of Mr. Amos Tutuola, the Nigerian author of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. To those who know his earlier books, this one will need no recommendation: to those who do not, I cannot say more here than that it is written in the author's own brand of highly explosive pigeon, and that the oddest things are constantly happening in it:

> But the Satyr slapped at her breast instead to fight her in return. And she became to the size of a baby. Without hesitation, he vomited a big bottle, he put her inside it by force, and before the old woman woke he had taken her to the Dark Jungle.

Mr. Tutuola is not "a typical West African voicing the joys and sorrows of his people": he is a very remarkable and individual writer who is no doubt a thorn in the flesh of an Education Authority that is training all his literate compatriots to write a very different sort of English and think a very different sort of African.

The Nimble Rabbit,* by Mr. John Brophy, is an amusing satire on the publishing world: good light reading for the jaded intellectual. Mr. Robert Harling's *The Enormous Shadow*† is a so-called psychological thriller that turns out merely to be a Burgess–Maclean story that is not half so interesting as the Burgess–Maclean story. It gets off to a very slow start and only the last forty pages have any real "grip." Both these novels seem to me weakest just where their authors presumably felt they were best—Mr. Brophy in his philosophical passages and Mr. Harling in his psychological. Do let's keep our light literature light, and our thrillers thrilling!

Hilary Corke

* *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle*. By Amos Tutuola. Faber and Faber. 12s. 6d.

* *The Nimble Rabbit*. By John Brophy. Chatto and Windus. 13s. 6d.

† *The Enormous Shadow*. By Robert Harling. Chatto and Windus. 12s. 6d.

AN ACHIEVEMENT IN CANDOUR

Marcel Jouhandeau was born in 1888 at Guéret in central France, the son of a butcher. He worked as a schoolmaster for almost forty years and is the author of more than forty books, a high proportion of which are understood to be lightly-disguised autobiography. From book to book, the disguise has indeed become lighter. In the earlier volumes Jouhandeau calls himself "M. Godeau," and to Guéret (a town with a mere six thousand inhabitants, but the administrative capital of a department) he gives the name "Chaminadour." In the later volumes he does not bother to modify his surname, and the centre of the action is no longer "Chaminadour" but the district of Paris lying due south of the Route de la Grande Armée, where Jouhandeau lives in a charming, absurd house, built as it were in the back garden of another house, in the Rue du Commandant Marchand, with his wife, Élise, formerly a dancer, whom he married in his early forties, now some twenty-six years ago.

The earlier volumes also betray more literary artifice. *M. Godeau Intime* is written in the third person, *M. Godeau Marié* in the first. *Élise Architecte*, *Animaux Familiers*, and *Nouveau Bestiaire* are (in form) mere extended diaries. The same trend may be observed in shorter pieces. *Les Pincengrain*, Jouhandeau's first volume, is a collection of "scenes from provincial life," beautifully done but in a more or less conventional short-story manner, though the title-piece itself links up with the "Godeau" cycle. A later collection, *L'Oncle Henri*, though still concerned with childhood, is first-person stuff and comparatively straightforward.

Amid all the horrors of French provincial Catholicism, the young Godeau is shown, for the most part, involved in tortuous relationships with a series of women older than himself or prematurely desperate. Both the "Godeau" and the M. J. of later volumes are shown living in a curious love-hate relationship with the energetic and sometimes brutal Élise, from whom both are described by

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themselves as liable to take refuge by yielding to extra-marital temptations of a homosexual nature.

This makes things very awkward for an English critic, who, as he writes and publishes under the laws of his own country, could presumably be convicted of libel if he were thought to have imputed to a French author what in France is no crime. French critics labour under no such disability. They are spared not only our absurd homosexual laws but our more damaging libel laws into the bargain. When liberal-minded people in this country agitate for the repeal of the former, they do so from altruistic motives. Yet in fact we should all benefit. It is the sense of belonging to a persecuted minority which keeps in existence a number of homosexual freemasonries which are troublesome in, at any rate, literary journalism and the theatre. In France, all this is open. A man may say what he likes on the subject, and nobody is harmed.

I ought, however, to make it clear that the homosexuality in the Godeau epic is by no means always on show and that, even when it becomes insistent, as in Part Two of *M. Godeau Marié* and in *Chronique d'une Passion*, it is given little colour. In these later volumes, the centre of the picture is generally Élise, whose absurdities are detailed for us with a loving exasperation.

THE scale of Jouhandeau's reputation in France is comparable with that of Miss Compton Burnett here. He is something of a writer's writer, and the writers who admire him always make it plain that this is something not for imitation. Jouhandeau gets more deeply under the skin than Miss Compton Burnett and, as he seems to be writing about himself, is frequently attacked on other than æsthetic grounds. The only other similarity, I suppose, is that both Miss Compton Burnett and Jouhandeau manipulate scandal and horror beneath a manner of unbroken primness.

There is only one other writer with whom it occurs to me to compare Jouhandeau, and that is Proust. The differences between them are, of course, great. Jouhandeau (though he has published volumes of *choses vues*, like *Images de Paris*) does not indulge in the lengthy descriptions and chromatic iridescence of Proust. As a writer, he is even more self-centred, and there are few characters in his books. The treatment of homosexuality is not at all the same: as little as forty years ago and in France, Proust thought it advisable to transpose the erotic tastes of his narrator, and at the same time his portrayal of homosexual episodes is lurid by comparison with Jouhandeau's. *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* is a single whole, whereas each of Jouhandeau's books exists separately. Yet both writers have pursued one, highly personal theme throughout their creative lives. And the achievements of both stand midway between autobiography and fiction.

This I take to be the main reason why Jouhandeau has not till now found an English publisher. Whether he might have found one if he had died in the twenties is open to question, but I feel pretty certain that Proust would not have found one today, even if there had been a C. K. Scott-Moncrieff still available. *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* was at least about high life, even if it was only French high life, but the card-index habit of mind has spread. The French have their terms "*récit*," "*chronique*," and so on, but we do not know what to do with such books. The librarian does not know what shelf to put them on. The publisher's traveller cannot explain them to a bookseller. The literary editor is in doubt which of his reviewers they should go to.

We dislike, I think, in any case, even straightforward autobiographies whose authors examine their own thoughts and feelings too closely. We want to know quite distinctly whether a writer was patted on the head by Henry James or has sailed round the world in a canoe. If he was brought up in a splendid house, let him describe the house and tell funny stories about his eccentric grandfather. We are prepared to hear whether the author was or was not happy at Eton, though, if he was not, we don't want a long tale about what went on in his mind while he lay snivelling in a darkened dormitory.

In general, we are perhaps wise, but the value we place upon reticence seems to imply a belief that to be too candid is only too easy. This belief I take to be false. It seems to me that human beings are generally confused in purpose and lacking both in simplicity of manner and in true self-consciousness. A main cause of lying I also take to be the sheer

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technical difficulty of accurately communicating the newly observed, so that, for instance, in describing to us an incident which has happened that day, most people make their account approximate to some anecdote of stock type. The best reason for discouraging easy confidences is that they are likely to be mendacious.

Occasionally, there arises a man in whom unclouded introspection is accompanied by a vivid eye and a penetrating tongue. He will be rare and precious, and it is silly to require of him either that he shall waste his time with the dreadful contrivances of a novelist or that he shall refrain from using any such little tricks of presentation as his modesty or his self-regard may suggest. He may not be at his best when all contrivances have been shed. It would be difficult to say whether Jouhandeau's masterpiece is *M. Godeau Intime* or *M. Godeau Marié*. In the face of such a writer, all one's notions of sincerity break down, if only because his malice may still be very important to him.

ONE does meet Jouhandeau fans in this country. A recent French supplement to *The Times Literary Supplement* printed, in French, a Jouhandeau story called *Cocu, Pendu et Content*. Yet it is still true that not a single book by Jouhandeau has appeared here. For what Mr. Turnell has now done* is translate extracts from seven of the books devoted to the married life of "M. Godeau." The extracts were made by a Mr. Kurt Wolff and are approved by Jouhandeau. The resulting "chronicle of a marriage" was published last year in America, where, I am given to understand, it received almost no critical notice.

The idea was a brilliant one. It is also a sad one. It must be sixteen years since I myself first murmured about Jouhandeau to an English publisher. That something of his has at last appeared in English is a good thing, but it is not as good as if the books themselves had begun to appear one by one, as now they will presumably never do. This is not Mr. Turnell's fault, we may be certain. One day, he will perhaps tell us the story of his attempts to get English publishers to do Jouhandeau

* *Marcel and Élise*. By MARCEL JOUHANDEAU. Translated by Martin Turnell. Longmans. 12s. 6d.

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properly. The best we can still hope for is that the present, rather slender volume may be followed by a composite Pincengrain volume, which would have to be much larger and perhaps to contain the whole of *M. Godeau Intime*, itself sufficiently large.

Jouhandeau cannot, I fancy, be very difficult to translate. The one essential qualification is a Catholic background, and this Mr. Turnell has. His introduction is brief and unexceptionable. The choice of extracts was intelligently made. If this is not exactly a book by Jouhandeau, it is nevertheless a book.

It contains about a quarter of *M. Godeau Marié* (reasonably omitting the reappearance of Véronique, who belongs to the world of the Pincengrains) and rather less from books themselves slighter, ending with *Élise Architecte*, which came out four years ago. There are delicious self-contained stories from the two series of *Chroniques Maritales*, but some of the other passages taken from this source are a little repetitious, while the presentation of *Élise Architecte* seems scrappy, and for my own part I would have preferred one of the longer self-contained pieces such as "*La Vie et la Mort d'un Coq*" from *Animaux Familiers*, a blissful account of marital jealousy over a rooster, which dies a sacrifice to this jealousy.

I wish I felt that I could usefully quote. Jouhandeau's style is, in its detail, neutral and unremarkable, a constant shifting of angle the most obvious source of its vigour. There are no startling ideas of a type claiming universal validity: the philosophy is stoic with a religious tinge, sometimes heterodox. After the last war, M. Jouhandeau was for a while *mal vu*, having, it was felt, compromised himself with the Germans, but it would hardly be possible to imagine a writer less political. He lives his narrow-seeming life and writes about it. Most lives are, after all, soap-operas, going on from day to day, the characters caught up in a situation which changes hardly at all. That is no doubt why we feel a need for the novelist's insidious mythology. With this, with what Simone Weil called "*l'imagination combleuse de vides*," Jouhandeau, who could have been a great novelist in the ordinary sense, has dispensed. It is a denudation which only the utterly first-rate can afford.

Rayner Heppenstall

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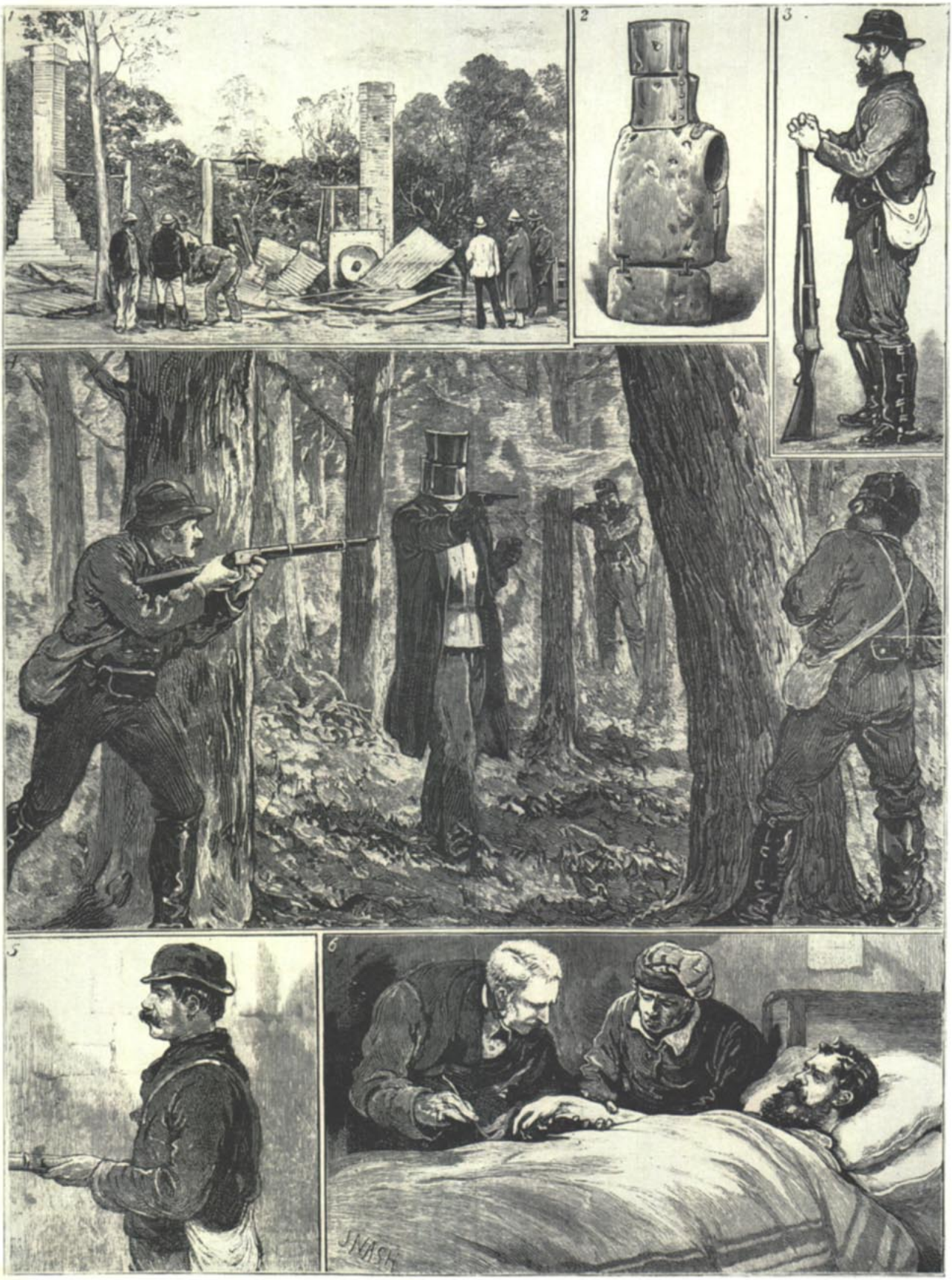

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